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THE RIVAL PHILOSOPHIES  
OF JESUS AND OF PAUL



# THE RIVAL PHILOSOPHIES OF JESUS AND OF PAUL : :

BEING AN EXPLANATION OF THE FAILURES  
OF ORGANIZED CHRISTIANITY AND A VIN-  
DICATION OF THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS,  
WHICH ARE SHOWN TO CONTAIN A *RELIGION*  
*FOR ALL MEN AND FOR ALL TIMES*

BY

IGNATIUS SINGER

AUTHOR OF "SOME UNRECOGNIZED LAWS OF NATURE,"  
"PROBLEMS OF 'LIFE,' " ETC.



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TO  
ALL LOVERS OF THEIR KIND,  
WITHOUT DISTINCTION OF RACE,  
CREED, OR COLOUR



## PREFACE BY REV. J. CYRIL FLOWER, M.A.

IT must have been a severe shock to any sincere person to realize how practically ineffective has been the witness and teaching of the Christian Church: practically ineffective, that is, in achieving the end which any unprejudiced student of religion would suppose to be its *raison d'être*. It has not, unfortunately, been ineffective in producing controversies, fomenting misunderstandings, erecting barriers. Nor, to do it justice, has it been ineffective in producing many noble types of individual life and character. Its ineffectiveness has been social. It is pledged up to the hilt, and in all varieties of its organization and expression, to the promotion of the Reign of Righteousness and the Brotherhood of Man. We do not need the terrible object-lesson of the present ghastly war to compel us to recognize that progress towards these ends has been appallingly slow, if even taking place at all. Yet the realization of these things is of infinitely greater moment than either doctrinal orthodoxy or individual piety.

This plain fact has been clearly envisaged by the author of this book, and he has with scientific honesty approached the question—Why is organized Christianity an ineffective instrument for the attainment of the supreme object for which it should exist if it really believed in Jesus?

The reply—which is the result of an honest and unbiased examination of the New Testament records undertaken in the spirit and with the methods of science—is likely to be astonishing and upsetting to many excellent and well-intentioned people. The truth is nearly always upsetting. And people with theological preconceptions are the most easily upset. But the earth moved round the sun in spite of the theological preconceptions of Bruno's



murderers ; and Jesus was a man, and a real man, in spite of the theological preconceptions of those who regard him as a mystery to be surrounded with pious words and misunderstood titles, and not as a man, sage, and seer whose teaching lays the foundation of the science of social life.

One of the most disquieting signs of the present time is the fact that people profess very widely to reverence the names and titles given to Jesus, while there is very little attempt to regard him as a real person. As Bernard Shaw has said, it is a sort of theological crime to speak about Jesus as if he were real. It is irreverent to speak about him except in terms of an ecclesiastically sanctioned mythology. It is difficult—facing the facts of life—to escape the conclusion that there has been a vast conspiracy on the part of the professed disciples of Jesus to evade the difficult task of understanding and applying his teaching—or even facing seriously the question as to whether it can be applied—by loading him with mysterious titles of superstition, and surreptitiously removing him from the realm of the concrete and actual.

This book, as the author takes pains to make evident, claims no infallibility. It is a scientific inquiry and analysis, and its thesis is set forth as a challenge to further honest inquiry for proof or disproof. It would be a remarkable thing if every conclusion of the author's were exactly correct, or immediately commanded the agreement of any or every reader. But the very exaggerations and mistakes of a sincere inquirer are more helpful than the multitudinous platitudes of the scribes who pretend that their inherited dogmas and the categories of their thought exhaust the whole of the truth concerning God, man and the universe. Thus the author's attitude to Paul, and his interpretation of Paulinism, is vehement to the point of contempt. Many of us are unable to share to the full his scornful dismissal of Paul. There is a great deal more to be said before we fully understand or rightly value what this man really meant. But that it is to Paul more than any other that we owe the conversion of the social and religious teaching of Jesus the Nazarene into the worship of the "Lord Jesus Christ" there can

scarcely be a doubt. And to any one who has rediscovered the rugged majesty and sublime simplicity of the Nazarene behind the cloud and thick darkness of mystification commonly called "Christology" it is not unnatural that Paul should seem at the very least a religious misfortune. But the fact is that this is largely our own fault, owing to our lamentable lack of imagination. Paul grasped something of the truth, and flung it into the thought forms and symbols of his time and people. To us those thought forms and symbols are either meaningless or impregnated with meanings quite remote from practical religion. Had we but imagination, we should be able to share Paul's faith, hope and love while we dispensed with the poor earthenware of his extraordinary theology.

This is a book which ought to be read and studied by every religious and moral teacher, and especially by clergy and ministers of all denominations. If it is not true, then it is the duty of the religious instructor to show in what respects and why it is not true, instead of labouring over the time-worn and meaningless errors of "doctrine" and theology. There is an ever increasing body of men, women and children who are utterly tired of the old absorption in speculative orthodoxies and heterodoxies. They want to know what it is right to do, not what it is correct to profess; they demand instruction in the laws of life, especially social life, not the demonstration of a futile ability to manipulate the parts of a theological Chinese puzzle. This book expresses, with simplicity and power, what a vast number of people do not perhaps consciously think, but what is slowly being borne in upon them by the manifold influences of actual life and experience. If it is all a mistake, the Church and its leaders will do well, in the interests of the Truth they are supposed to serve, to face and tackle what is at any rate real, instead of beating the empty air of theological make-believe.

But if it is true—if in spite of the almost inevitable fact of many minor errors and mistaken conclusions the main thesis of the book is true—then even more it is time for religious teachers, clergy, ministers to awake out of sleep. They will have then to face the question how

they can make use of the vast machinery of the Church to inculcate the truth and cause it to be practised. The mere attendance at "divine worship," the mere external signs of devotion to and reverence for Jesus under the name of Christ, will no longer be an adequate end for the existence of ecclesiastical systems. It will become necessary to use the whole of the resources of the Church—of all the religious bodies—to train up disciples of Jesus the Nazarene, seekers and workers for the Reign of God, the Rule of Righteousness and Justice: men, women and children touched to the quick with the revolutionary spirit of progress: a community for whom the "spiritual life" is no longer a thin and bloodless abstraction remote from the actualities of life and fact, but is the very sum and essence of healthy, happy social life. If this book helps to stir up even a few to realize and strive for this supreme end for which Jesus lived and taught and died, it will not have been written in vain, but will help in that rebirth of religion without which there is little hope for the world.

J CYRIL FLOWER.

BOLTON.

LETTER FROM THE REV. VIVIAN T.  
POMEROY, B.A., TO THE AUTHOR

You have allowed me to read the MS. of your book. Your central contention has profoundly stimulated my thought, and I will say frankly that you have been the means of making a turning-point in my endeavour to preach the religion of Jesus and apply that religion to the crying needs of the present time.

My gratitude to you takes the form of an ardent desire to see your work published. I urge you to spare no pains to this end. I am convinced that many ministers, especially those of the younger generation, have a painful sense of dissatisfaction with conventional Christianity, but they have not possessed themselves of the clue which will enable them to discover and comprehend the potent, life-bringing philosophy which conventional Christianity has overlaid. *I believe your work supplies that clue.* You have vindicated Jesus as being, not the unpractical dreamer we have tacitly taken him to be, but the sanest teacher who has ever spoken to the world, and the saviour of mankind in a sense to which past and present theology has blinded us. Your book, if published, will provoke much discussion and probably antagonism; but the points you have raised are precisely those which require discussion to-day. From such discussion I am sure nothing but good can result.

I keenly hope that before long your work will be in the hands of many of my brother ministers.

I am,

Yours sincerely,

VIVIAN T. POMEROY.



## AUTHOR'S PREFATORY NOTE

"With all earnestness I invite, for these Reports, the study and thought of men and women of good-will. We shall not all agree about the various recommendations. *We want critics as well as advocates.*" (The italics are not in the original.)

THUS His Grace, the Archbishop of Canterbury, in his Foreword to "The Teaching Office of the Church."

The present volume has not been written in reply to these Reports. Indeed, most of it had been written for some years past. But the time being opportune, I humbly submit this volume as a layman's contribution to the discussion asked for by His Grace.

The question to which an answer is sought just now by all thinking people is not merely Why has *the Church* failed?—which seems to have been the chief point of reference to the Committee appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York—but Why has *Christianity* failed in its mission?

The obvious *a priori* answer seems to be, Because either the doctrine, or the teaching of it, is faulty.

It is from this point of view that the writer has pursued his inquiry. We shall not all agree about the conclusions arrived at. But the points raised are just those issues which will have to be discussed before an answer to the most burning question of to-day is at all possible. Needless to say that such a discussion can be profitable only if carried on in a spirit of sincerity and of truth, and not from the narrow point of view of the propagandist or advocate.

As the search of truth was the sole object of the writer, he of necessity had to ignore creeds and conventions. Those, therefore, who may resent the freedom with which

I have examined facts and doctrines I would remind that *freedom of discussion* is essential in any inquiry which is meant to be real, and not a mere sham. Whilst to the timid I will quote from a private communication the following weighty words of the Rev. Dr. J. Clifford :--

"It is not the truth that suffers from the most searching investigation; they suffer who will not undertake it, and who would hinder others from seeking it."

THE AUTHOR.

October 1918.

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## FOREWORD

THIS work was forced upon me in connection with the education of my children in a way that I will briefly outline.

In common with so many others, I dissociated myself at an early age from what is conventionally called religion. Many years later only did I learn that what I abandoned was not religion, but a superstitious system of belief and worship which usurps its place.

Theology is not religion; nor are creeds, rites, beliefs, formulæ or ceremonials. I will not even concede that these are adjuncts of or in any way related to true religion, any more than are the beliefs, doctrines or ceremonials of other creeds or systems of worship which the reader himself regards as mere superstitions. The commonly accepted connotations of the word "religion" have really nothing whatever to do with the subject at all. True religion—if such a thing is possible, as I firmly believe that it is—must be also a true science: a Science of Conduct.

But this is not the occasion to argue these matters. The point is that I believed in these views and consequently desired to inculcate them in my children, and that this caused me no end of trouble and embarrassment.

Broadly speaking, the spiritual teachings of our times may be divided into two great systems of thought: one embracing doctrinal theology, supposed to represent religion; and the other science and philosophy, which are supposed to be anti-religious. The most superficial reflection must convince the reader how erroneous is this classification, and how mistakenly the thrusts at theology and creeds and the jibes at senseless dogmas or childish legends are described as "Conflicts between Science and

There are, and there can be, no such conflicts. The conflicts have been and are with theology, with creed, with doctrine and dogma, and with supposed miracles which—whether credible or not—have nothing whatever to do with religion itself.

Thus, whichever side I might have chosen, the children were bound to be falsely educated; for religion, though *practised* in both camps, is *taught* in neither. The consequence of this unsettled state of affairs is the spiritual unrest so characteristic of our times, which has penetrated even to the seminaries and the pulpits.

It is this uncertainty where to find that undefined "something" for which mankind is instinctively groping that keeps people from the churches, and not—as is so foolishly asserted—the decadence of religion or religious sentiment. Quite the opposite is the truth. Never before has mankind been agitated by such a strong, genuinely religious spirit the world over as at the present day. There is certainly a great and growing falling off of attendance at public worship, but it would be easy to show that this is due to the renaissance of religion rather than to its decadence.

The atmosphere is charged with a desire for a higher, nobler and more unselfish life. Doctrines are questioned, institutions are recast, old beliefs are re-examined, all with practically one end and one aim in view, variously stated as the demands of "humanity," of "civilization," the "higher life," "altruism," etc. There is a striving and a yearning after something which Churches—*qua* Churches—do not supply; a thirst which they seem unable to quench.

It is this "new spirit"—as it is sometimes called—which seeks to find expression in so many different ways that is the *true religion*. It seeks to express itself in deeds rather than in ceremonials, and puts the present welfare of *others* before the future bliss of *self*.

The reason why this nameless "new spirit" is not recognized as religion is because theologians have appropriated that word for their dogmas, creeds, and rites;

children of our Father which is in heaven " as " secular," " worldly " or " earthly."

Ministers and congregations who are taking their full share in this onward and upward movement, themselves regard it as something outside the true functions of the Churches ; as something that is desirable, good and commendable, but which is not " spiritual." Yet it is this nameless *spirit* which is striving for recognition, which is gaining in strength and volume, and is emptying the churches because they do not recognize it

This state of things seems to be accepted as final and inevitable. That which is *conventionally* called religion no one really believes in. The ceremonials and rites are kept up partly from habit, and partly from a foolish fear of the effects on society if it were admitted that most of what is called " religion " is mere make-believe.

But why all this unrest and doubt ? The answer is, because the *Authority* on which the Churches relied is gone. The Bible is not the inspired book it has been thought to be, is not infallible, is not even always reliable. Science has immolated it on the altar of Truth. The Churches had built their house on the sands of theology—" And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house ; and it fell ; and great was the fall of it."

But it was *theology* that fell, and *not* RELIGION. The principles of religion are older than that house, or the sand-hill on which it was built ; aye, older than Jesus who proclaimed them—coeval with the universe itself, and as eternal.

It is really too absurd to think that with all the scientific knowledge of the age our belief in a " World Spirit " (or " God ") should still depend on the authorship or the authenticity of a collection of writings, or that it should be thought that if these were lost, or if they had never been written, we should be without knowledge of a ruling or governing power in the universe.

It is a poor foundation to rest one's faith on, and I wanted my children to build on firmer ground.

been the founder of the science. It may be doubted whether he really was the originator ; evidence may be forthcoming that he was not ; that he borrowed his knowledge from previous writers. Some one may even hazard a theory that no such person ever existed ; that Euclid was the name of an idol who was credited with having taught mankind the mysteries of mathematics. It will not matter in the least. Their faith in the *principles* taught by Euclid, or in the name of Euclid, would not be shaken, for the truth of these does *not* depend on authority. They carry their own internal evidence.

But how about the children's religion ? Had I taught them as conventionality demands, and allowed them to leave my protecting roof uninformed as to the truth which we all know but are too shy to express, the first breeze that came their way, wafting a new fact towards them, might have shaken their faith in religion itself, as it has done and is doing with so many ; as at one time it did in my own case.

I have said enough, I believe, to show the reader the peculiar situation in which I found myself in relation to my children--a situation which is by no means an isolated or an exceptional one. Whilst they were too young to appreciate nice distinctions and disquisitions, I had trouble to prevent their receptive minds from being marred by false doctrines or popular prejudices. For although I was careful not to sow anything myself that might want uprooting later on, I could not prevent some of the tares which were scattered broadcast in the land from falling among my carefully winnowed seed. Nor was it possible always to antidote what the children were taught at school, heard from the pulpit, or picked up from their companions on the playground. I had constantly to watch and to do much weeding ; sometimes even had to allow the tares to remain, lest in uprooting them I might pull up some of the wheat also.

This led to many embarrassing discussions, which generally ended on my part in the promise that I would explain when they were old enough to understand. I did

the Bible and religion, what they were bound to learn in any case on entering the broader path of life. I preferred to tell them myself, and at the same time to teach them a truer, a better and a more enduring religion than that which is "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. xv. 9).

The inevitable consequences followed. The children felt, what the mass of educated people are feeling, the want of some reliable guide, and urged me to write down in a connected form the instructions I had given them piecemeal at various times, as occasion arose.

I promised to do so, and these chapters are the fulfilment of that promise.

Originally my intention was merely to give a brief outline of my views on religion, which was to embrace the ethical teachings of Jesus, and not to trouble at all about the myths which have grown around the Teacher's name. But it soon became increasingly obvious that the plan was unworkable. It was my aim to *convince* rather than to *persuade*, and this involved greater labour than I had anticipated. It is one thing to have a general conception of a subject which satisfies one's self; and quite another thing to write those opinions down in cold black-on-white so as to be equally clear and convincing to others; and so I was forced into a study which originally I had not contemplated.

If I were to accomplish the object I had in view, it was not sufficient merely to set forth what Jesus undoubtedly did teach, but also what he did not teach, although such teaching had been fathered upon him. And to do this with any hope of success it became necessary to enter into the origin of those myths and fables which have been associated with Jesus, although it can be clearly proved that these are all of a later date, and had not been current during the lifetime of the Great Teacher. To see the philosophy that is genuinely his in all its profundity and purity, it is not sufficient to look at the few ivy-covered fragments which are jutting out from beneath the accumulations of centuries; we must lay bare the



structures which cover the mound have to be disturbed. It is not pleasant work, but we must not shrink from plying the spade, or using brush and duster, when the precious relics cannot be revealed in any other way.

Thus it happened that the brief outline which I had originally intended, strictly for the guidance of my own children only, has been expanded into the present work. I publish it because I think it may be of help to others who are circumstanced as I was, and in the conviction that by doing so I am serving the best interests of *genuine religion*.

I have received much help of one kind and another from friends—in some cases from strangers through the kind mediation of friends—in the preparing of this essay, to all of whom I herewith tender my best thanks. I am indebted to the Rev. Vivian T. Pomeroy, B.A., and the Rev. J. Cyril Flower, M.A., who, in addition to their help in revising the MS. and making many useful suggestions and corrections, have volunteered the commendatory introductions which grace the opening pages of this volume. I owe special thanks to my old-time friends, Mr. Ch. H. Smithson and Mr. Jabez Crabtree, who for years past have taken a keen interest in the production of this essay; who have assisted the work in many ways; and whose zeal and effort have made the publication of the work possible in these trying times. Lastly, though not in any lessened degree, I wish to express my gratitude to Mrs. Ch. H. Smithson for her freely given help in preparing the manuscript for the press.

I also desire to record that I am indebted to Mr. F. R. Eccles, now of New York, and to the Hon. George Fowlds, of Auckland, N.Z., who in years past, in the trying initial stages of this arduous task, have been helpful to me by their frank if severe criticisms.

It does not follow that those who have thus helped me agree with all my conclusions. For these, as well as for any remaining defects, the only person responsible is

THE AUTHOR.

**PART I**  
**THE HISTORY OF JESUS**



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

OUR only sources of information concerning Jesus or his teachings are the canonical writings of the New Testament and the New Testament Apocrypha. We shall accept these as what they are: a miscellaneous collection of ancient documents which, like other similar collections, contain a record of traditions, legends, beliefs and a mass of anecdotal matter relating to persons and events, some of them historical, some mythical, all jumbled together without coherence, system or method.

Apart from the inherent and natural difficulties which such a motley collection of matter presents to the student, these writings—until quite recently—have been enshrouded in a halo of mystery and sanctity which made a frank and rational examination of their contents well-nigh impossible.

It is safe to say that on no other book or books has so much thought been spent, or so much ink spilt, as on the Gospels and the other writings of the New Testament. Notwithstanding, it is equally certain that these truly human documents have never yet been examined with that impartiality and cool judgment that would and should have been accorded them but for the claims of divine authorship and authority that have been made on their behalf.

As far as their actual contents are concerned, the Gospels are practically still unexplored. The controversies have mainly been about extraneous matters—doctrines or creeds that have been based upon them—and combatants have searched the Gospels, not for what

is buried in them, but for arguments in support of their contentions, to prove or to disprove a point of doctrine.

These thoughts occur to me in reply to a reflection whether it is not rather venturesome for a layman to enter a field of research where so many eminent scholars have been working so strenuously without any result that is worth mentioning. To be quite frank, I am trying to satisfy myself that my conduct does not bring me within the meaning of a certain adage. But, after due consideration, I have come to the conclusion that whatever may be my own shortcomings, those who have been treading here before me—whether in fear and trembling or with the boldness of self-assurance—were certainly not “angels,” whether judged by their methods, their results or their estimate of one another.

Before me I have several volumes on *The Life of Jesus*, each by an acknowledged scholar and authority on the subject. Among them are Neander, Strauss, Renan and Farrar. I have read them and admired the industry and learning each has displayed in trying to prove his own theory—one that Jesus was God; the other that he could not have been; the third making out that he was a thaumaturgist and charlatan; and the fourth trying to hide behind a florid rhetoric the fact that he did not himself believe in the miracles he was reciting, but did not care or dare to say so. To my mind, instead of regarding it as arrogant to ignore conclusions so vastly divergent, I think it would be folly rather to attach any importance to them.

As I have already stated, I look upon the New Testament as a collection of ancient documents, and as such I propose to examine them for what they contain, with the help of the usual laws of evidence.

I can hear it objected that after having destroyed their authority, it no longer matters what the Gospels contain, since then they will have lost all force. My answer is that these fears are groundless. Whatever truth the Gospels harbour will be able to take care of itself. That which carries its own evidence possesses also its own force; and that which has nothing else to support it

than *authority* is not worth retaining. In fact, any such doctrinal or legendary matter which depends on authority or sentiment for its acceptance is the very bane of religion, and that for the following reason : The object of religion is to unite mankind ; whereas doctrines or legends that must be accepted on trust or authority have the very opposite effect . they separate us.

Therein lies the great civilizing power of science, that it makes no demands on credulity, imposes no penalties on disbelief, knows nothing of authority, and recognizes no boundaries, geographical or racial. All nations accept the facts of science no matter who may have been the discoverer. Science is international, republican and democratic. What there is of comity between nations is far more due to science and commerce than to any of the creeds.

One of my objects is to show that the same is true of *the Religion of Jesus*, as distinct from and opposed to doctrinal Christianity. I desire to establish further that *Jesus was not the founder of Christianity ; that the Christ-myth had no existence until many years after his death ; that his teachings and the teachings of doctrinal Christianity are mutually exclusive and opposed to each other*. I desire further to show that whilst there was a real Jesus, the "Christ" of the Gospels is a myth ; and I desire to establish this by tracing the origin and evolution of the latter. And I propose doing so *without going outside the New Testament writings for evidence*.

The nature of this evidence will be unfolded as I proceed. But I may be allowed to say here that I have not—as is so often the case—searched the Gospels for arguments to prove a foregone conclusion. *The facts which are disclosed in these pages were unknown to me when I commenced writing, and have been as surprising to myself as gradually they came to light as probably they will be to many others !*

I have no new creed to preach, nor old ones to disprove. I have no concern with creeds at all. The task I am engaged on is to trace the history and philosophy of a great teacher, as yet little known because of the super-

stitutions, myths and legends that have been woven round his name.

I hope to depict (I believe now for the first time) a sage about whose historicity there can be no doubt; whose philosophy will stand the severest scrutiny of modern science; and whose postulates—so much derided even by his professed followers—are the only possible foundation for a sound philosophy.

But how shall we set to work? How obtain a lead amidst such chaos as we are confronted with?

The plan I propose to follow is that which an archæologist would adopt in the investigation of an ancient ruin the history of which is unknown. His first step would necessarily be to get rid of the weeds, rubble and all those accumulations of time which obviously did not belong to the original structure, and thus lay bare what of the latter has escaped the ravages of time, and then examine what is left. More than once have we seen such ruins on our holiday wanderings, and by help of what was left tried to reconstruct mentally the edifice as it may have been at one time.

We saw, maybe, a row of columns, most of them broken, all of them damaged more or less. Parallel to them at equal distances there would be remnants of masonry which resembled the base of the columns still standing. In parts even these were missing, their sites being bare and level with the ground. Nevertheless, from a portion of an arch that was still projecting from the top of one of the columns we had no difficulty in reconstructing mentally the cloisters which undoubtedly once covered the ground, and the Gothic arches which these columns at one time must have supported.

Continuing our explorations, we could locate in the ruins the sites once occupied by the dormitory, the refectory, the chapel, the cells, etc. Parts of the buildings we could recognize as later additions, not contemplated by the original designer, from the fact of their being distinct in material, style and purpose from the main structure. We had no difficulty in concluding that a building close by had been built at a much later date—not, in fact, until

after the destruction of the main building, because it had been constructed with materials mostly taken from the ruined structure. Many of the stones in this comparatively recent and uncouth erection could be identified by their shape, or the carvings on them, and we could often tell what part or position they had once occupied in the original structure. The fact that in the newer building these stones were thrown together without definite plan or system, and without regard to shape, size, purpose or position, made it evident that originally these stones had been intended for a different purpose, and once formed part of an altogether different edifice.

This picture fairly represents the state in which we find the Gospels ; and the method of investigation here indicated is the one which I intend to apply to these ancient documents. It is the method of common sense which has yielded such splendid results in every branch of knowledge to which it has been applied.



## CHAPTER II

### RELICS FROM AN ANCIENT GOSPEL

But the second is like unto it. Love thy neighbour as thyself

As in the case of the contemplated ruin, let us begin our inquiry by examining those few remnants which, having withstood the ravages of time, are jutting out like pillars—as it were—from beneath the mound, and betoken by every test that can be applied that they are unmistakably of more ancient origin than the flimsy fabrics around them.

I will begin with what is known as the Parable of the Good Samaritan, but will rename it “The Parable of the Priest, the Levite and the Samaritan.”

The parable is chiefly remembered for what it is taught as in Bible classes: as a lesson to be kind to your neighbours and to succour suffering. But these lessons are incidental only, and of quite subsidiary importance to the main issue, which concerns the foundation of the religion of Jesus. True, the parable is the gem of the narrative; but its value, nevertheless, is in the setting of it, and not in the lesson of kindness which it incidentally inculcates.

To understand the real and full significance of this parable we must note what has led up to it. A lawyer came to heckle Jesus. Like every great reformer, Jesus had his opponents, great and small. There were those who were uncompromisingly hostile either from mental bias or interested motives. There were the sectarians who opposed the new teaching on doctrinal grounds. And there were those who claimed to be liberal-minded, but who regarded the doctrines preached by Jesus as far-fetched utopian and altogether impracticable.

To this latter class belonged, evidently, the lawyer who stood up and "tempted" Jesus, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

He did not ask the question as one desiring to be instructed, but "temptingly." It was a challenge, as from one knowing what answer he would get and who is prepared to prick the bladder with a pointed question held in readiness. But in this he was mistaken. For answer Jesus simply referred him to the law: "What is written in the law? How readest thou?"

The lawyer rattled off: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And Jesus said to him: Thou hast answered right: this do and thou shalt live" (Luke x. 27-28).

The narrative goes on to say that the lawyer, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?"

Here let us pause for a moment to analyse the situation. It will be noticed that the lawyer's question, "And who is my neighbour?" refers to the second part of the law only, whereas the reply of Jesus, "This do," made no such discrimination but referred to both laws. To appreciate the meaning of the lawyer's question as to "who was neighbour" we must understand the issue about which the lawyer intended to heckle Jesus.

There were two "laws" or "commandments" which were fundamental in Jewish philosophy. These were "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God" and "Love thy neighbour as thyself." The scribes and the Pharisees—that is, the ruling classes—laid all the emphasis on the *first* and Jesus on the *second* commandment.

The "Pharisees" interpreted the "love of God" to mean prayer, adulation, sacrifice and worship. They glorified God in a manner that would gratify a human despot. As for the second commandment, it was entirely subordinate and its fulfilment consisted at best in alms-

\* I am retaining the phrase as used by the evangelists, although it is used in a sense which is incorrect and misleading.

giving. Jesus, on the other hand, regarded the second commandment as arising out of the first, and, therefore, as its corollary. There was no way of loving God save by taking care of his children. God was the Father of us all. We must hallow him in his fatherhood: "Our *Father* . . . hallowed be thy *name*." This can only be done by a full recognition of our brotherhood. "One is your Master and all ye are brethren." This idea of the Fatherhood of God of *all mankind* is the foundation of all his precepts and teachings. It was the will of "our Father which is in heaven" that none of his children should suffer at the hands of each other. "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of these, ye have done it unto me." "If any offend one of these little ones, better a millstone were hung round his neck, and that he were drowned at the bottom of the sea." Or again, "If thou bring thy sacrifice to the altar and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar and be reconciled first to thy brother." Thus, and thus only, can you glorify your "Father which is in heaven." Therefore THE FIRST COMMANDMENT CAN BE FULFILLED ONLY BY THE OBSERVANCE OF THE SECOND. It is the pivot of all his teaching, and it is on this point that Jesus met with the strongest opposition.

This led to quibblings as to the relative importance of the two commandments, the *first*, on which the "scribes and Pharisees" relied; or the *second*, on which centred the teaching of Jesus and which he contended was "like unto the first."

When, therefore, Jesus simply referred the lawyer to "the law," he made no distinction as between the first and second commandment, for to Jesus the two meant one and the same thing.

Not so, however, with the lawyer. Not having received the answer in the form in which he had expected it, and "willing to justify himself," he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?" That is, he took up Jesus on the second commandment, evidently trying to show the impracticability of his teaching.

And now came for answer the illuminating parable,

which I will quote in full : " And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain *priest* that way . and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a *Levite*, when he was at the place, came and looked at him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain *Samaritan*, as he journeyed, came where he was and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two coins, and gave them to the host, and said unto him : Take care of him, and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which *of these three*, thinkest *thou*, was neighbour unto him that fell among thieves ? " (Luke x 30-36).

Reluctantly and evasively the lawyer admitted, " He that showed mercy on him." Again he was made to answer his own question.

But the chief significance of the parable he evaded, as do most of our Bible expositors of to-day. For, had it been the object of Jesus merely to teach the lawyer that " he that showed mercy was neighbour," he could have chosen *any three men* for his parable, whereas he selected a *priest*, a *Levite*, and a *Samaritan*.

It is just in the selection of the characters that the importance of the lesson is comprised. For the first man whom Jesus made to pass by on the other side was a *priest*, a man of prayer and fasting, of rites and ceremonials, looked upon as holy by his people. The second man was a patrician, equally punctilious in all the rituals of the synagogue. And the third ? A despised alien, a Gentile, an unbeliever, a pariah, loathed by every self-respecting Jew in those days as is a negro to-day in Christian America.

Among these Jesus bade the lawyer to choose :

" Which now *of these three*, thinkest *thou*, was neighbour to him that fell among thieves ? "

The lawyer cleverly evaded the main issue by ignoring the status of the three persons named, and according his verdict to "him that showed mercy." To say outright, "The Samaritan," was perhaps too much to expect. He could not so debase priest and patrician, co-religionists and compatriots, as to prefer a Samaritan to them by name.

But, notwithstanding his fencing, he had to admit more than he was probably aware of at the time, and that is, that religion of *deed* comes before profession of *creed*. And that is the lesson of the "Parable of the Priest, the Levite and Samaritan." To speak of it as the "Parable of the Good Samaritan" only is to ignore its chief lesson.

Jesus explained to the lawyer, *and to us*, what his religion was. Creed, prayer and fasting; patriotism, race, nationality, clanship; wealth and social position; were all brushed aside so as to accord place of honour to a good deed, even though performed by one of the least of the sons of "our Father which is in heaven."

In the view of Jesus conventional piety, unsupported by good conduct, counted for nothing; whilst a good deed did not lose anything of its merits because performed by a person not belonging to a particular or to any sect. We shall see further on that the *absence of creed* was an essential feature of the religion of Jesus, as in true religion it is bound to be.

This narrative is by no means an isolated passage, but one out of many, all to the same purpose. As our investigation proceeds it will be seen that Jesus never uttered a word that is ever so remotely inconsistent with the spirit displayed in this brief but telling narrative. That there are many sayings in the Gospels attributed to Jesus which are diametrically opposed to it is, of course, admitted. But we shall not find it difficult to show that all such passages are apocryphal.

In this parable we have the key to the religion of Jesus. Theology could extract nothing more from it than an exhortation to be kind and to succour the weak. Blinded by its own dogmas, it never noticed the two leading principles that inspired it, that are the essence of it, and that must be the basis of true religion, if a true religion is

possible at all. These are its *catholicity* and its tendency to unity, concord and fellowship, in sharp contrast to the discordant and disruptive tendencies of the creeds which theology has evolved.

We will but briefly note these at present, for we shall see these two principles permeating the philosophy of Jesus.

Take, for instance, the lesson just noticed which Jesus imparted to an antagonist. The lawyer asked, "Who is my neighbour?" Jesus made him answer his own question and in a way he neither anticipated nor intended.

In this instance a bigoted Jew had to answer his own question contrary to his prejudices. We might submit the same problem, thus clearly stated, to Brahmin, Buddhist, Mohammedan or Freethinker with the same result. Its *catholicity* is clearly due to the total absence of any suggestion of theology, creed or dogma.

Even the name of the author might be eliminated without weakening the force of the lesson; for the fact that *Jesus* was the propounder of it clearly could not weigh in its favour with the heckling antagonist. It is characteristic of all the precepts of Jesus that they intrinsically make for unity, peace and concord, without needing any other support.

Obviously there can be but one true religion, and therefore such a religion—if possible at all—must tend to unite mankind. Indeed, this is the test whereby to distinguish true religion from its counterfeits: "By their fruits ye shall know them."

What are the fruits of the pseudo-religions with which we are acquainted—not excepting any? They are known to history as *religious* dissensions, *religious* feuds, *religious* wars, *religious* frauds, and even as *religious* CRIMES. Surely no sadder commentary is possible on the general conception of religion than the linking of the word with ideas which stand for its opposite, without anybody being shocked by the incongruity of the combinations, or the paradoxes which they suggest.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Of course it is acknowledged that there were within the pale of the several creeds people whose sentiments, thoughts and actions were above

Here is another one of these "pillars" of a similar design and in an almost perfect state of preservation.

On a certain other occasion another lawyer asked Jesus—also "temptingly"—"Teacher,<sup>1</sup> which is the great commandment in the law?"

Save for the purpose of challenging a statement or an argument, there would be no sense in asking this question of a Jew. As well ask him whether he knows his own name.

Nor was Jesus an ordinary Jew, or considered such by the heckling lawyer, who addressed him as "rabbi," i.e. "teacher." To assume, therefore, that the lawyer merely wanted to find out whether Jesus knew the commandment is too absurd for even a moment's consideration. Moreover, the narrator plainly says that the question was asked "temptingly," which in itself indicates that an argument was at issue between the lawyer and Jesus. The context not only shows this to have been the case, but from the answer of Jesus, as well as the conversation that followed it, we are able to gather the nature of the argument.

As has already been pointed out, Jesus laid great stress on the second commandment—"Love thy neighbour as thyself"; whereas the "scribes and Pharisees" held the first to be the supreme law. Hence the challenge of the lawyer, as if saying, "In your concern for mankind you are forgetting God. Do you not know the great commandment in the law?"

For answer Jesus recited the law and then added: "This is the first and great commandment. *But* the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

the narrowness of the faith which they professed. It is not the people who are here criticized but the philosophy in which they have been brought up. Most people are better than their creed.

<sup>1</sup> The Greek word "didaskale" (i.e. "teacher") has been rendered "master" in the A.V., which often obscures the true meaning of certain passages. Thus, for instance, when a disciple addressed Jesus according to the English translation as "Good Master," Jesus rebuked the disciple for calling him "good" yet accepted the "master." But if "teacher" is substituted for "master" this seeming inconsistency in Jesus is removed.

This makes sense of a narrative which, in the form in which it is presented in the English Version, is meaningless. There Jesus is made to say, "*And the second is like unto it*"—rendering the Greek particle "*de*" by the conjunction "*and*" instead of the argumentative particle "*but*"—which robs the passage of its meaning. For it is not likely that Jesus would have thought it necessary to inform an exponent of the law what the wording of the second commandment was.

This, or a similar incident, is also recorded in Mark, the wording being slightly different. Jesus is there said to have added, "*There is none other commandment greater than these two.*"

There is no contradiction in the two accounts, but rather corroboration. Very probably both versions are correct, the different wordings having been used on different occasions. The accusation that Jesus was ignoring the great law, and that he was teaching heretical and revolutionary doctrines, could not have been an isolated occurrence, but must have followed him to the cross. As constant must have been his reiterations that "*the second law was like unto the first.*" Had the incident occurred once only, it would scarcely have survived or been handed down to us.

According to Mark there was a dramatic sequel to this episode. The lawyer was struck by the answer and the interpretation Jesus gave to the two commandments. "*And the scribe said unto him, Well, Teacher, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God and there is none other but he: and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.*" And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, "*Thou art not far from the kingdom of God* (Mark xii. 32-34)."

Note the consistency with his reply given to the other lawyer: "*Thou hast said right, this do and thou shalt live.*" That is, obey the *two commandments*. And now again when this lawyer says that the observance of



these two laws "is more than all the burnt offerings and sacrifices," Jesus said to him, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God"; "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets"; and "There is none greater than these two commandments." True, indeed, that he had not come to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfil.

But here I must digress in order to restore to the phrase "kingdom of God" its original meaning and to correct a grave blunder committed by the early Christians, that has been perpetuated to this day. The Greek word "*basileia*," here and elsewhere translated "kingdom," has two meanings. Like the English word "dominion" it may refer to the *rule* of a king (which is the original meaning of the word) or, metaphorically, to the territory ruled over. We shall see in a later chapter that many of the legends and miracles had their origin in giving such material interpretations to abstract words or phrases.

Jesus never used the phrase in any other sense than "the rule of God" or "reign of God," as is clear in each case from the context. When, for instance, he said to the lawyer "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God," the phrase can have meaning only if Jesus meant—as evidently he did mean—that the lawyer was not far removed from the "rule" or "law" of God. It is obvious that merely by assenting to a proposition he could not be any nearer to a *locality*. Compare also "Thy kingdom (i.e. 'rule' or 'reign') *come*: Thy *will* be done on *earth*," etc.

The Gospels are full of such blundering errors of translation and misinterpretation—sometimes due to the ignorance of the scribes and sometimes to theological bias—which makes the student's task often very tedious.

What Jesus meant by the "kingdom" he desired to establish on earth will become even more clear when we examine yet another of these relics which we find in the Gospels.

A certain ruler came saying, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" Not temptingly, but with desire for information.

Three of the Gospels record this incident—Matthew, Mark and Luke ; and, barring verbal differences, their agreement as to everything that is essential leaves little to be desired. He was not a heckler. According to all the accounts this man was genuinely desirous of knowing what he should do to inherit eternal life. He was a true disciple, for we are told that Jesus, beholding him, “loved him.” Therefore, if ever there was an occasion or an opportunity in the whole career of Jesus to declare his scheme of salvation, surely this was the supreme moment. And for myself I have not the least doubt that he did do so, and that his answer is correctly reported. The consistency is proof of this. In the first place Jesus rebuked the disciple for giving him a distinctive predicate. “Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God.” Then he gave him this simple direction: “Keep the commandments.”

“Which?” asked the disciple, and the answer was explicit: “Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and mother, and Thou shalt *love thy neighbour as thyself*”<sup>1</sup>

Not a word about believing. No hint about the necessity of baptism. Not even an intimation about attendance at the synagogue, about burnt offerings, sacrifices or fastings. Or shall we suppose that such instruction had been given, but had been lost in the transmission? Is the account as it has reached us perhaps incomplete? Not so. The narrative does not leave us in any doubt, for it goes on to say that the young man, wishing to be certain about his duties, said: “All these I do already, what lack I yet?” For answer, Jesus said that if he wanted to be perfect, all he could do was to sell what he had, give it to the poor, and help him to preach the same gospel to the rest of mankind.

There is not only agreement between these scattered narratives, in sharp contrast to the tenor of the rest of the Gospels, but a most remarkable consistency of aim and purpose—not merely as between the three incidents

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xix. 16-21.

we have noticed, but also with the exhortations of the Sermon on the Mount, which—by universal admission—constitute the essence of the teachings of Jesus.

Here as elsewhere—that is, in those portions of the Gospels which in style and diction no less than in doctrine are so easily distinguishable from the rest—Jesus is laying emphasis on what he himself calls “the greatest of all commandments”: “Love thy neighbour as thyself.” In so doing, that is, in loving our “neighbours,” whosoever they may be, we are hallowing the Fatherhood of God.

Rites and ceremonials were of no account at all. They were not condemned, but at the same time were admissible *only after due observance of the law*. Every trespass against a fellow-man, even the slightest, was an error which no amount of prayer or sacrifice could condone.

All his precepts and all his arguments are centred around this principle. Our ideal was to be God, the *Father* which is in heaven: “For he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and unjust.”

Contrast now with these pure and sublime teachings the following words which are put into the mouth of Jesus by Mark:

“And he [Jesus] said unto them, Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.”<sup>1</sup>

Compare this illogical, incomprehensible and brutal decree with the reasoned, humane and gentle exhortation:

“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you; *that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.*”

Is it possible to believe that the same teacher, so

<sup>1</sup> To save some critic an unnecessary trouble, I may point out that it is known to me that it has been questioned whether Mark wrote the verses in which this passage occurs. But if he did not, some other scribe did; and the words summarize well the basic doctrine of Christianity.

consistent, so clear and logical, and so meticulously just and gentle as is the author of the Sermon on the Mount could have pronounced so unutterably absurd a decree? What, if we accept this as genuine, are we to make of the other injunction which bids us to be "like our Father which is in heaven"? The proposition is too absurd for serious argument.

## CHAPTER III

### THE GOSPELS

LET not the reader be shocked at the freedom with which I am handling these precious documents—precious because of the treasures that are buried in them, but not because of the false reverence which has made them into a fetich. It is too late in the day to contend that there are no errors or contradictions in the Gospels, or that their authors were infallible; and my object is to expose error and not to reverence it. Much as I should like to avoid anything of a controversial nature, it is quite impossible to get at the truth without disturbing some of the cobwebs that cling to it. But let the reader remember that it is less impious to say that men have blundered than to attribute manifest absurdities to divine inspiration. Nor can it be irreverent to prove—as I hope I shall—that where doctrine and common sense clash, it was the scribes and commentators who blundered and not Jesus.

There are plenty of contradictions in the Gospels; not merely as between one another, but doctrines of far-reaching import that are diametrically opposed can be found in the same Gospel. The explanation, however, is a simple one. *There are two distinct philosophies promiscuously mixed up in the Gospels, each consistent with itself, but irreconcilably opposed to the other*: hence the confusion, contradictions, absurdities and paradoxes.

We must look upon these writings not as records, but as relics of such. Fragments of some former work concerning a great man and his teachings which have escaped the ravages of time have been collected and treasured—as such relics are—by disciples of the teacher,

and handed down from generation to generation, embellished with anecdotal lore. We shall see further on how these ancient relics came to be incorporated in the Gospels we possess.

Time is a dual force. Its devastations are as often due to its creative as to its destructive powers. It not only wears and dilapidates, but also contaminates and corrupts, until it becomes difficult to distinguish the original from the later accretions and transformations. This is true of organisms as soon as life is extinct and they are no longer able to withstand the power of external influences. It is true of the works of man, when the care and trouble necessary for their preservation no longer shields them against the destructive powers of nature. And it is doubly and trebly true of historical records that have been left to the care of tradition.

It is obvious that at the time when the Gospels were written a cult had already grown around the name of Jesus and that the Christ-myth, with all its legends and doctrines, must have been established—else they could not have been written about as they have been. Let us clearly grasp this fact: What the evangelists recorded was not contemporaneous history, but traditions—then already old—extant in those days, as is clearly stated by the author of Luke's Gospel. Therefore, at the time the Gospels were written—"compiled" would probably be a more correct word to use—time had already done so much of its devastating work—destructive as well as creative—as to require great skill and critical acumen to separate fact from fiction, history from legend, or the teachings of Jesus from the doctrines of a sect which built its creed around his name and fame after the manner of the ivy that clings to the oak for support and in the end strangles it.

But the evangelists possessed no such talents and made no attempt at criticism. In the words of Luke, they accepted all "as even it was delivered." They came to the ancient ruins—the literary relics of Jesus—when tradition and legend had already covered them with shrines and altars; and they remained, not to inquire

and to examine, but *to believe* and to worship according to already established custom.

To us the value of the Gospels lies in the fact that they disclose the ancient relics almost as the evangelists found them. I say *almost*, because transcribers and translators have made notable changes, as we shall learn further on. The evangelists themselves, however, seemed to have preserved unaltered what tradition had handed down to them. They do not seem to have disturbed anything. Their genuine respect for everything that was even remotely associated with the name of Jesus forbade them to do so; and their ignorance and want of any vestige of critical acumen concealed from them the often glaring discrepancies between the few genuine remnants of a more ancient gospel and their own doctrines and beliefs. Thus it came that they did not feel the necessity for deliberately tampering with the text as theologians of a later date felt constrained to do. And thus it happens that we have two incompatible and mutually exclusive philosophies in the Gospels—not side by side, but interspersed and interlarded in the most haphazard fashion—one being the teachings of Jesus and the other expressing the beliefs and doctrines of a sect who—mistakenly, as we shall see—regarded Jesus as their founder.

Of these the older and the sounder one—the philosophy of Jesus—is overshadowed by the Christology of a much later date. Nevertheless the latter is but a parasitic growth on the former, as is the mistletoe on the tree on which it thrives and from which it derives its sustenance, but which it neither resembles nor is in any way related to.

Instead of accepting the Gospels as “sacred”—a theory which nowadays no educated person, lay or cleric, really believes in—let us inquire what claim these documents have to be regarded as possessing any authority at all. Let us tabulate what is known about the New Testament writings. I shall state such facts only as are undisputed and indisputable.

1. We do not possess, as far as is known, a scrap written

by Jesus himself. We do not even know whether he has ever written anything on preservable material. The only record of his ever having written anything at all is that "he wrote with his finger on the ground" on a certain memorable occasion.

2. We do not possess any records written by eye or ear witnesses, or by contemporaries of Jesus. Not one of the manuscripts that we possess is in the handwriting of its author, all of them being copies or translations made, we know not by whom, when or where, and are derived probably from a long series of successive copies. In the words of Dr. F. Blass<sup>1</sup>: "No two different editions (of the Gospels) are absolutely identical, nor are any two written copies, nor is any edition or copy identical with the original writing."

3. Not only do we not possess the originals of these writings, but we do not even know always in what language they may have been written; so that in many cases it is not only copies, but translations which we possess, without being able to check the accuracy of either copyist or translator.

4. It is proved beyond doubt that these writings have been corrupted by alterations, omissions, or additions, sometimes from ignorance in translation or transcription, and sometimes from design. Dr. Blass,<sup>2</sup> having pointed out some such mutilations, says: "At any rate we clearly see that there have been very ancient readers who did not shrink from wilful alterations of the sacred text, if it did not suit their dogmatic convictions, or if it might give support to opposite tenets."<sup>3</sup>

5. All the New Testament documents were avowedly written by their authors *after* the death of Jesus, and hence even the originals were only records of traditions.

(In subsequent chapters I hope to trace some of the legends to their source, and to prove that the Gospels must have been written after such legends had been established and their true origin forgotten.)

6. The Gospels contradict each other on many material

<sup>1</sup> *The Philology of the Gospels*, p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> Loc. cit., p. 89.

<sup>3</sup> Of this sin the English translators and revisers are not guiltless.



points, and often the writer of the same Gospel records doctrines, or attributes sayings to Jesus, that are diametrically opposed to each other, without himself seeming to have been aware of the contradiction.

7. The Gospels contain many absurdities, paltry miracles such as ignorant people or children delight in telling of their heroes, often introduced without necessity or any apparent rhyme or reason.

If we examine the contents of these documents for internal evidence, the uncertainty and confusion become greater still.

Words and phrases have changed their meaning between the times of Jesus and the evangelists, and again since the time of the evangelists to now. Many words were used by Jesus in a technical or a metaphorical sense to which the evangelists gave literal interpretations; and the same thing has happened when theologians translated and interpreted the already misconstrued and distorted accounts which these scribes gave of the sayings and doings of Jesus. Many of the "miracles" have no other foundation than such perversion of simple matters of fact by the stupendous ignorance and credulity of wonder-mongering zealots.

All these blunderings, corruptions and falsifications—some accidental and some of them wilful—added to the inherent difficulties in reading ancient documents owing to the changed meanings of words and phrases, make it impossible to quote a text from the English translation without—in many cases—the necessity of first confirming the translation or removing a false interpretation given to it by the translators.

We do not know for certain in what language Jesus spoke, except that it was not Greek. There did not exist in those days—certainly not among the fishermen and tentmakers of Galilee—a vocabulary capable of expressing facts in nature, or philosophical theories, that were clear and incapable of misinterpretation by the vulgar. On the other hand, the facts of nature (or the "reign of law") were the same then as ever; and although there did not exist a system of science such as

we know to-day with a terminology of its own, there were at all times men who, "by extraordinary genius or by the accidental acquisition of a good set of intellectual habits"—to borrow a passage from J. S. Mill—saw and recognized the uniformities of nature in the midst of what to the mass of mankind seemed mere chance and chaos. I am unable to find a phrase that would correctly express what is so vaguely and so misleadingly called "the reign of law" or "forces of nature," notwithstanding that I am thinking in the rich English language of the twentieth century. What must have been the difficulties of a philosopher two thousand years ago, who desired to communicate any such ideas to his ignorant and superstitious contemporaries, with only a limited vocabulary at his disposal? Jesus perforce had to pour the "new wine into old bottles" and the consequences followed as a matter of course.

We do not find in the Greek of the Gospels words for "space," "universe," or "nature," in their modern philosophical sense. The word "nature" is used to-day to include the universe or existence, in the most comprehensive sense. The Greek word "physis" had no such meaning—certainly not among the writers of the New Testament. Nor did they have a corresponding single term to express the same idea. They had the words "God" and "heavens"; the latter to express the idea of "space" or "universe," and the former for its government. We still are using both these words in the same sense, although we have a choice of others whereby to define their meanings; as, for instance, when we say that the astronomer "scans the *heavens*" in search of the "laws of God."

But what different meanings may be given to the words "heaven," "God" and "law" by a philosopher and an ignorant and credulous rabble, we shall presently see.

Jesus, for instance, frequently spoke of "the kingdom of God" or the "kingdom of heaven." The Greek word "*basileia*," as previously explained, has two meanings; firstly, it means *dominion*, *reign*, exercise of kingly

power ; and sometimes (metonymically only) it meant also realm or territory under kingly rule. Jesus obviously used it in the former sense when, for instance, he prays "Thy kingdom come, thy *will be done on earth*, as it is in heaven" ; or when he said to the lawyer who approved of the principles of the two great commandments, 'Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.'<sup>1</sup>

Either passage has meaning only if kingdom is rendered by "dominion," "reign," or "rule."

Perhaps even more clearly is this meaning of the word "*basileia*" indicated in Matthew xii, verses 26-28, where the *dominion* of Satan is contrasted with that of God. Jesus, having been accused of "casting out devils,"<sup>2</sup> argued as follows : "If Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself ; how shall then his *kingdom* stand ? . . . But if I cast out devils by the spirit of God, then *the kingdom of God is come unto you*."

That Jesus did not mean a territory, or a "kingdom" in space, is clear also from the difficulty he had in explaining his meaning to the multitude, as well as from the parables which he used to illustrate his meaning. He would not have needed parables to explain what a realm ruled over by a king meant ; nor would he have had occasion to say, "Therefore speak I to them in parables, because they seeing see not ; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand."<sup>3</sup> The parables themselves have no reference at all to a realm or territory, and by no stretch of the imagination will they bear such an interpretation. The parables of the sower, of the mustard seed, and the leaven, are all intended to illustrate *the spread of truth* once it has taken root. The actual words are "*logon tys basileias*" ; literally "the laws of the reign," but have been translated by the meaningless phrase "the word of the kingdom." Here are the two latter parables as printed in the Authorised Version, and

<sup>1</sup> Mark xii. 34.

<sup>2</sup> 'Casting out devils' meant dispelling wrong opinions, that is "false spirits," and substituting "good spirits" for them, the modern equivalent for which is the phrase "making converts." See chapter on "The Holy Ghost," forward.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xiii. 13.

the reader may judge for himself whether they bear the meanings given to them by the evangelists :—

“ The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed . . . which indeed is the least of all seeds ; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.” And “ The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.”

All this is understandable when “ *basileia* ” (here translated by “ kingdom ”) is understood to mean “ dominion ” : a doctrine, a law, a principle, an abstract truth which may “ come ” or be imparted to us ; which can “ grow ” like a mustard seed, “ spread ” like leaven ; “ which cometh not by observation ” but “ is within you.”

That, however, is not what the evangelists understood by it. Theirs was a grossly material kingdom, differing from the earthly kingdom they were acquainted with in the same degree only as the happy hunting-grounds of the Indians differed from the toilsome hills and forests of their native haunts. That is, they were looking for a realm in the clouds where there was to be peace and plenty, to which the wicked were not to have access, and where death and tribulation were to be unknown.

The King himself in this kingdom differed from the earthly king only in being more just, rewarding the deserving and punishing the transgressors. “ Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations,” Jesus is made to say, “ and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me ; that *ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*”<sup>1</sup>

It was not a “ kingdom ” that could “ come ” to them, but one they had to be taken to ; and the same gospel which says the “ kingdom of God cometh not with observation ” also warned the “ faithful ” that the coming of the Lord to fetch them would be heralded by a commotion and a turbulence such as had never been witnessed before : “ There shall be signs in the sun, and

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxii. 28-30.

in the moon, and in the stars ; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity ; the sea and the waves roaring ; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on earth ; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." <sup>1</sup>

The author of Matthew's Gospel was even more sensational, for he says that "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and *the stars shall fall from heaven . . .* and the Son of Man . . . shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." <sup>2</sup>

This is the kind of "kingdom" the founders of Christianity were waiting and looking for—a *realm* in the clouds, after the world has come to an end, a kingdom that not only did "come with observation," but with a turbulence enough to waken the dead. Notwithstanding, the faithful were warned to keep careful watch lest they be asleep at the moment. "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. . . . Watch ye therefore. . . ." <sup>3</sup>

Moreover, they expected to get into the new kingdom in the flesh. These childish zealots who could think of concrete things only, who could conceive of the "stars falling" and of the heavens being "rolled up like a scroll," were unable to conceive of existence apart from the body, although the doctrine was believed in and taught by some of the sects of their time.

Life eternal meant to them exactly what the words mean in their literal sense. They hoped to get into the new kingdom in the clouds alive, and in the body. They had no conception of a spiritual existence. It is in his body, in the actual flesh, that the evangelists believed Jesus to have risen. For when he appeared in the midst of his disciples—as we are told—they did not believe in his resurrection until he assured them thus :—

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxi. 25-26.    <sup>2</sup> Matt. xxiv. 29-31.    <sup>3</sup> Luke xxi. 34-36.

"Why are ye troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and feet, that it is myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have."<sup>1</sup>

And as if to allay their last doubt he is represented as having asked, "Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of broiled fish, and of an honeycomb; and he took it and did eat before them."<sup>2</sup>

These are fair specimens of the understanding, as well as of the reasoning powers, of the authors of the Gospels.

It will be seen that abstract words and phrases were taken with a wooden literalness, and difficulties were got rid of by analogies and dialectics. Jesus spoke of a "kingdom of heaven," and they conceived it as a *locality* in the sky. He hoped to bring about a reform—alas! as so many have imagined who saw a truth and thought it needed only to be uttered in order to meet with universal acceptance—within a measurable time; said something about "This generation shall not pass away" or "There are some among you who shall not taste of death before the dominion of God shall be established"—and these ingenuous zealots, in their childlike simplicity, interpreted the *hope* thus expressed into a *promise* of being translated into a new realm where death shall be unknown, and where there shall be peace and plenty.

In like manner he may have said—and doubtless did say, "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail"—meaning, of course, that a principle ("logos" or "entole") is eternal—and they turned it into a prophecy that heaven and earth *shall* pass away. Hence it is that they located their "kingdom" in the clouds.

They believed it all, too, and lived up to their belief; sold their earthly possessions and made common cause. What need of hoarding these corruptible things when they are shortly to enter into their glorious inheritance? "Behold, the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

They prayed, and watched, and waited, and beguiled

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxiv. 38-9.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 41-43.

the time by telling and retelling those thrilling tales about "the Lord Jesus Christ" and his promises, and the glories of which they were to be the sharers. Many were the tales of the adventures and experiences of the Lord that were told. Here is one of these, which sheds a sombre light on the intelligence of these poor dupes: "Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask . . . To sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give. . . . And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren."¹ As well they might be, for this really savoured of things that were earthly.

Examples might be multiplied. But these are sufficient to show that we need not be so overawed by the authority of these scribes as to condemn the author of the Sermon on the Mount on their unsupported testimony.

The object of this chapter was to inquire into the authenticity of the Gospels. I trust the unprejudiced reader will agree with me that far from being "inspired," "literally true," or "divinely authenticated," it would be difficult to find any writings—ancient or modern—in the world's literature which exhibit more grossly all the marks of human origin and human frailty than these so-called "sacred" writings. Nor need we be either surprised or dismayed at this. Centuries of experience and education have failed to produce an infallible man, or a book free from error of some kind or other; so that it seems irrational (rather than pious) to look for such infallibility in the manifestly ignorant and superstitious authors of the Gospels.

The question for us to decide—each for himself, of course—is: Shall we say so? Or shall we "in the interest of religion"—as some seem to think—*pretend* to a belief that is not sincere? Put thus bluntly, another question

¹ Matt. xx. 20-24.

suggests itself: What kind of a "religion" is it that needs the support of a falsehood? Or, what is to be expected from a "religion" that is based on insincerity and untruth?

At these cross roads I accept the common-sense guidance of Jesus: "Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit." I am quite unable to see any profanity in saying that certain fishermen of Galilee were not infallible; nor any piety in attributing their errors and blunders to God.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE EVANGELISTS

A MERE perusal of the Gospels, if unbiased, is sufficient to reveal the manner in which they were composed, even if the author of Luke's Gospel had not frankly told the "most excellent Theophilus," to whom his treatise was addressed, that "Many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are *most surely believed among us*, even as *they delivered them unto us*, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and *ministers of the word*."

This means that the Gospels are not original histories of facts personally known to their authors, but *records of traditions* that were "surely believed among us"—that is, the members of the sect to which the writer belonged—as they have been handed down by those who from the beginning were supposed to have been eyewitnesses and "ministers of the word."

It is sufficiently plain from this, as well as from an unbiased examination of the other Gospels, that at the time they were written the Christ-myth had been fully developed and the Christian cult had been established. The "most excellent Theophilus" had been brought up in that faith and there were already "ministers" who preached the word. In other words, the sect called "Christians" for the first time at Antioch <sup>1</sup> *many years after the death of Jesus*, was already established when the Gospels were written.

How the sect originated, what were its tenets and beliefs, and other matters concerning it and its members, we shall learn by and by. Here I will only say—what

<sup>1</sup> See Acts xi. 26.

is already sufficiently apparent—that Jesus was neither the founder nor a member of the sect; that the latter did not come into being until many years after his death; and that he was no more responsible for Christianity or its strange doctrines than he was for Mohammedanism or Mormonism.

The evangelists had collected the traditions of their sect and anecdotes concerning its supposed founder and “set them forth in order”—that is, one item following the other as each was remembered or came to hand—without reference to contents, coherence, or logical sequence. There was not the slightest attempt at assimilation or editing.

This, no doubt, accounts for the patchy, mosaic character of their compilations. It also accounts for the many contradictions and antagonistic doctrines of which there is a superabundance in each of the four Gospels. Any scrap of writing relating to Jesus would naturally be treasured by its possessor, and when the authors of the Gospels were fortunate enough to get access to such, or heard of some by word of mouth—in the latter case distorted sometimes beyond recognition—they would set it down without reference to what preceded it or what was to follow.

In this way can we account for the fact that we find two distinct and antagonistic philosophies interspersed and interlarded in these “scrap books”—we can hardly call them anything else—without any intention, and apparently also without the knowledge of their authors.

This circumstance has caused much embarrassment to “divines” of later generations, and has been the occasion of much spilling of ink in the attempt to harmonize that which is irreconcilable. But we of this generation have reason to be thankful for this fortuitous and fortunate combination of reverence and ignorance, for it is to this circumstance that we are indebted for the preservation of those few relics of a much older gospel which enable us to obtain a glimpse of what Jesus did teach, and to dissociate it from the doctrines that have been fathered upon him,

It is not difficult to pick out the former from among the latter, as they differ not only in doctrine, but also in style, diction, method of reasoning, sentiment, aim and purpose. From whichever point of view we may choose to regard them, the compositions of the evangelists and these intercalated excerpts are as different from each other as any two compositions could possibly be.

If we separate the contents of the Gospels on these lines into two portions, most of the contradictions and many of the absurdities—mostly due to the mixing up of two mutually exclusive philosophies—disappear. We then find all the legends, superstitions, and absurdities in the one part; and a well thought out, coherent, and singularly lucid and consistent philosophy in the other.

There are many doubtful passages which, either in form or doctrine, are reminiscent of the style of Jesus, but which in transmission have been corrupted, sometimes beyond recognition. But once we have become acquainted with the peculiarities of each style and the trend of thought of the respective authors, it is often possible to trace such corruptions to their source. (Several such examples will be given.)

To see the difference in style and diction we need only compare the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew (commencing verse 3, chapter v, to verse 27, chapter vii) with what precedes and what immediately follows it. The Sermon is introduced abruptly, as if this had been the beginning of the ministry of Jesus, and as abruptly the style changes again to what it was before.

It might be said that this is but natural, since the Sermon would be reported in the preacher's own words, and hence the difference in style. No doubt that is the actual fact. But whence, I ask, did the writer get his verbatim report? The Gospel of Matthew was certainly not written until years after the Sermon had been preached. We shall see in a later chapter that it could not have been written until generations later. For my present argument, however, it is sufficient to say that it was years after. So much is manifest from a mere perusal

of the Gospel itself, since it is not in the style of a chronicle written up day by day, as the events which it records have happened, but is professedly an account of *past events*, written after the death of Jesus.

How long after we may infer from such passages as these: "*In those days* came John the Baptist . . ." (chap. iii. 1).

"Wherefore that field was called the field of blood *unto this day*" (chap. xxvii. 8).

"So they (the soldiers) took the money, and did as they were taught; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews *until this day*" (chap. xxviii. 15).

Such phrases are not used except after a lapse of a considerable number of years.

Now my contention is that the writer of this Gospel could not have reproduced the Sermon from memory after so many years without impressing his own style and diction on it. The style of the "Sermon" is not only essentially and characteristically different from that of the evangelist, but is in every way identical with that of the three narratives we have noticed in a previous chapter, and others yet to be discussed.

Let me give an illustration in support of my contention. Almost the whole of chapter xi purports to be matter spoken by Jesus; but there can be no doubt that the composition is the evangelist's own. We need only compare what Jesus is here made to say with the peculiar style of the Sermon on the Mount.

Jesus never appealed to prophecies, nor did he rely on ancient authorities in support of his teachings. His style of address was: "Ye have heard of them of old time . . . *but I say unto you* . . ." justifying his new interpretation of the ancient law by arguments that made direct appeal to the understanding; as when, after having enjoined his hearers to love not only their neighbours, but also their enemies, he says:—

"For if ye love them which love you, what merits have you; do not even the publicans the same? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more than others?"

In the words of the evangelist, "He taught as one having authority and not as the scribes."

On the other hand, the style of the evangelist—whoever he was—was typically that of the scribe, whose office it was to interpret the scriptures and who was in the habit of fortifying his own opinions by constant appeals to the prophets. Here are a few specimens of his style:—

"Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying . . . " <sup>1</sup>

"That it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord. . . . " <sup>2</sup>

"Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy. . . . " <sup>3</sup>

"And he [Jesus] came and dwelt in Nazareth; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets. . . . " <sup>4</sup>

"That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias. . . . " <sup>5</sup>

And so on throughout.

Now, although Jesus in the Sermon gives most important and far-reaching directions, he never makes any such appeals to authorities, but rather brushes them aside, always substituting logical argument for authority.

Comparing these two styles, it is easy to see that when the evangelist makes Jesus say—as he does in chap. xi. 10—"For this is he *of whom it is written*, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face . . . "; or "And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was to come"; he is putting his own words into the mouth of Jesus. The apocryphal character of this discourse is still more manifest in verse 12, where Jesus is made to say, "From the days of John the Baptist *until now* . . .," a manner of speech which implies a considerable lapse of time, whereas John predeceased Jesus by only two years!

The phrase is intelligible when used years after the event by an ignorant scribe, who is hardly likely to notice the implied anachronism; but it would have been meaningless in the mouth of Jesus.

My contention is that the Sermon, the three narratives

<sup>1</sup> Matt. i. 22.    <sup>2</sup> ii. 15.    <sup>3</sup> ii. 17.    <sup>4</sup> ii. 23.    <sup>5</sup> iv. 14.

I have already quoted, and several others, were not the composition of the author of the Gospel, nor were they oral traditions, but must have been copied from some more ancient manuscript, of which fragments only existed at the time when the Gospels we possess were written. I am also inclined to think that these compositions were written down by their original author, and that because nobody else could possibly have done so in the terse, forcible and convincing language save the mind that had thought them out and was familiar with the philosophy that was underlying them all. The author of the Gospel could never have written the Sermon, for instance, as we find it in Matthew.

Either, therefore, the Sermon had been taken down verbatim when it was delivered, or Jesus must have written it down himself. In either case the evangelist must have copied it, as well as the narratives which are in the same style, from some older manuscripts, but of which he could have seen fragments only.

These compositions are not like fantastic ebullitions of a doctrinaire enthusiast, but are the deliberate, weighed and carefully chosen words of a clear thinker who shows much logical acumen and an extraordinary power of concentration. Each sentence, and each word in each sentence, is part of a well thought out system. Moreover, none but he who had thought out the philosophy, and therefore had perfect command of all its ramifications, could have met the objections of the heckling lawyer, for instance, as did Jesus when in a few well chosen words he confounded the objector and made him answer his own objections.

The scribes who naively tell us of the miraculous conception and the birth of Jesus; who could believe that "The star which they (the wise men) saw in the east went before them till *it came and stood over where the young child was*"; who expected the stars to drop from heaven, and that heaven and earth would be rolled up like some stage property, and similar absurdities; who, in short, could record two such mutually exclusive doctrines as coming from the same teacher without being aware

of the absurdity or commenting thereon : could not have invented the dialogue between Jesus and the lawyer, nor written the Sermon as we find it in Matthew, even if we leave questions of doctrine out of consideration.

It is as unthinkable that the authors of these Gospels should have written any of these narratives or the Sermon, as that their true author could have said, according to Matthew :—

“ Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ” ; or according to Mark :—

“ He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be damned ” ; or according to Luke :—

“ Lest they should believe and be saved.”

But this brings me from difference in style to difference of doctrine, which will be best discussed in a separate chapter.

## CHAPTER V

### THE ANOMALOUS DI-UNE "JESUS-CHRIST"

My object really is not so much to establish the actual authorship of Jesus for these few scattered literary relics—though every consideration seems to support that theory—as to prove dual authorship of the writings in the Gospels and likewise duality of doctrine. I believe that what I have already said would be sufficient to establish both contentions in respect of any other book. I do not flatter myself that I have effected this in the present case, particularly with those readers who from infancy have been taught to look upon the Gospels as they would on no other book.

Jesus is credited with having been the founder of "Christianity"; that is, it is alleged that he has propounded those basic doctrines which are the foundation of every Christian creed.

Now anything more incompatible with the principles of the philosophy of Jesus than the basic doctrines of Christianity it would be difficult to conceive. I shall show in a later chapter—without going outside the New Testament—that during the lifetime of Jesus neither "Christ" nor "Christianity" was even thought of; which, of course, must dispose of any connection between the historical Jesus and the Christ-myth. My present object, however, is to show the utter incompatibility of the character and doctrines attributed to "Christ" with the character and teaching of Jesus.

In the first place, it is quite unthinkable that the teacher who laid such stress on the exclusive Fatherhood of God and exhorted his followers not to give distinctive titles to any but to "the Father which is in heaven"; who



objected to be called "Rabbi"; who rebuked a disciple for calling him "*good*"; would allow himself to be called the "*Lord Jesus Christ*," much less command it and require worship of himself on pain of eternal damnation. Yet that is at the foundation of the creeds which claim authority from Jesus. "To believe on the *Lord Jesus* and to be baptized" is the fundamental doctrine of the evangelists as it is of the Christian faith.

That Jesus himself did not think so—quite apart from incompatibility with his teaching—is sufficiently evident from the instructions he is reported to have given to the young ruler who, "kneeling," asked him what he must do to "inherit eternal life."<sup>1</sup> In the answer of Jesus there is no suggestion of either "baptism" or "believing." As previously pointed out,<sup>2</sup> there is no room for supposing that the narrative is incomplete, that the passage relating to "belief" and "baptism" might have been lost. The final question and answer dispose of any such theory. Besides, if the evangelists are right, these injunctions should have had precedence before all else.

There are only two very far-fetched and improbable hypotheses possible to account for the omission of "believing on the Lord Jesus Christ" and of being "baptized" in the answer of Jesus, if they really formed part of his scheme of salvation. *Either* Jesus deliberately withheld from the inquirer that which—according to the evangelists—was most essential, and to teach which he expressly came into the world in such a dramatic fashion and left it so tragically; *or*, that all three evangelists have deliberately excised and suppressed just that portion of the answer which they themselves considered the most essential part of it.

Either supposition is too absurd for serious argument. Such a defence, moreover, would be self-destructive,

<sup>1</sup> "Eternal life." The reader need not take these words too literally. Scribes, copyists, and translators have all helped to impart a theological and sepulchral flavour to words and phrases which was never intended originally. I shall deal with these in a later chapter. It is not practicable to stop at every instance to expose such errors.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter II.

inasmuch as it would dispose of the trustworthiness of Christ, evangelists, and Gospels alike.

But, apart from dialectical arguments, the teaching of Jesus in those passages which are unmistakably in his style is so fundamentally opposed to these illogical and absurd doctrines as to make it quite impossible to attribute both to one and the same person without seriously calling in question the sanity, or the moral integrity—or both—of such a person.

There is only one rational theory possible to explain these inconsistencies, and that is supplied by the Gospels themselves, if we examine them without prejudice. They contain—as I have said already—two distinct systems of philosophy, one being there by design and the other by accident. This explains all the inconsistencies and absurdities; for whatever estimate we may form of the creed of the evangelists, it is perfectly consistent with itself and—judged from their point of view—quite intelligible if we eliminate the sayings of Jesus. The absurdities become manifest only when both doctrines are attributed to Jesus and we are trying to harmonize them with each other or with his character.

It is obvious that by promiscuous quotations from the Gospels, without having previously separated the contents into their component parts, almost any theory could be "proved," and just as easily disproved. On the other hand, unless we thus separate from each other what are so clearly two distinct trains of thought, it is quite impossible to form a rational conception of what the Gospels teach or enjoin, or to delineate a character of the supposed teacher that shall be consistent or rational.

In the Gospels the real Jesus and a legendary Christ have been combined into an impossible monstrosity.<sup>1</sup> Some fanatics—earnest and ignorant at the same time, as all fanatics are—have made themselves an idol of clay, into the composition of which entered some shards

<sup>1</sup> How it came about that the name of Jesus became associated with doctrines that are so contrary to the spirit of his teaching we shall learn in a future chapter.

that were associated with the name of a great sage who lived generations before their time, but concerning whom and whose teaching they only knew what tradition had handed down to them. The idol is Christ; the illuminated shards in this image of clay are all there is left of the real Jesus. They are there as is the "ballast" in the concrete, as a foreign matter just thrown in. Thus viewed as a sort of literary bric-à-brac, the Gospels are intelligible and form most interesting human documents, which well repay a careful study. From any other point of view they constitute a confused mass of incoherent statements.

This explains the divergent and discordant conclusions that have been arrived at concerning the character of Jesus, which range from the God-man to the charlatan; the incomparable sage to the fool and madman; the personification of unselfishness to the self-seeking, tricky Oriental; the wonder-worker to the deceptive and fraudulent conjurer.

This survey does *not* include opinions of extremists, of writers who are openly hostile to Christianity or religion; nor of iconoclasts who roundly deny that there ever has been a historical Jesus; but are the conclusions forced upon thoughtful and sympathetic scholars who have honestly tried to reconcile the many contradictions that are so embarrassing even to the most devout doctors of divinity.

I will quote but one of his many biographers, the genial French savant, Ernest Renan, who actually assumed the rôle of special pleader to justify in Jesus what he himself considered as contraventions of the moral code.

Here are a few specimens of how he tried to explain the extraordinary things attributed to Jesus:—

"The man who is destitute of any notion of physical laws, who believes that by praying he can change the clouds in their courses, stay disease and even death, finds nothing extraordinary in miracles, since to him the whole course of things is the result of the free will of the Deity." <sup>1</sup>

"It is evident that the title Rabbi, with which he was at first contented, no longer sufficed him, even the title of prophet or messenger of God corresponded no longer with the ideas. The position he attributed to himself was that of a superhuman being, and he wished to be regarded as possessing a higher relationship with God than other men."<sup>1</sup>

"The need which Jesus had of gaining reputation and the enthusiasm of his disciples, caused contradictory notions to accumulate. To men specially filled with hopes of the coming of Messiah, and to ardent readers of the Books of Daniel and Enoch, he was Son of man; to Jews holding the ordinary faith and to readers of Isaiah and Micah, he was Son of David; to his disciples he was Son of God, or simply the Son. Others . . . took him for John the Baptist risen from the dead, for Elias, or for Jeremiah. Absolute conviction, or rather an enthusiasm which shielded him from even the possibility of doubt, covered all these audacities."<sup>2</sup>

What are we to make of conclusions like these, or of the Gospels which have forced them upon an evidently sympathetic and learned scholar against his own will? The fault, I submit, is neither in the Gospels nor in the scholar, but in the insistence on a fetish—which has grown into an established habit of thought—that the Gospels are authentic documents, and that, however much we doubt that which they record, we are not free to question their trustworthiness. We may disbelieve the evidence, but we must not doubt the witness, however contradictory are his depositions. That explains how Renan could arrive at the conclusion that the author of the Sermon on the Mount—based though this is on first principles—was a superstitious ignoramus; that he who enjoined on the people to "call no man master"; who censured the Pharisees for loving to be greeted as "Rabbi"; who rebuked a disciple for calling him "good," was no longer satisfied with such titles as "Rabbi," "Prophet" or "*Messenger*, of God"; and that the teacher of the highest ethical code was himself a dissembler, being all

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Jesus*, chap. xv.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. xv.

things to all men, in order to satisfy the paltry ambition of being thought "great among men"!

But all these accusations are as nothing in comparison with what is implied in the "defence" which this gallant French savant felt himself called upon to make on behalf of the hero of his book. Here is a specimen of his "vindication":—

"To us, members of deeply serious races, conviction means sincerity to one's self. But sincerity to one's self has not much meaning to Oriental people, little accustomed as they are to the subtleties of the critical spirit. Good faith and imposture are words which, in our rigid consciences, are opposed as two irreconcilable terms. In the East there are numberless loopholes of escape and circuitous paths from one to the other. . . . Literal truth is of very little use to the Oriental; he sees everything through the medium of his ideas, his interests, and his passions."<sup>1</sup>

I shall not waste time to comment thereon, because I hope that the chapters that are to follow will effectively dispose of this libel. But it is of interest to note to what straits those are put who accept the gospel narratives as trustworthy and try to make sense of them.

For it must be admitted that many passages might be quoted from the Gospels in support of Renan's contention—just as easily as in refutation of it. But what is *not* possible is to conceive of so variegated a character as results when we try to combine in one and the same person all that is attributed to "Jesus-Christ." Even theology has been unable to do so, notwithstanding the amphibious character it has evolved for the purpose and assigned to the di-une man-god or god-man "Jesus-Christ."

The mistake which Renan—in common with others—has made is that he confused the Christ of the evangelists with the Jesus of history—two characters that cannot be amalgamated into one.

Great as is the perplexity of learned scholars concerning the character and teaching of the composite Jesus-Christ, the matter at issue is really a very simple one, and may

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Jesus*, chap. xv.

be settled consistently with common sense and reason without having to go outside the four Gospels. The nature of the solution I have already indicated; we must resolve the impossible monstrosity into its components, the historical Jesus and the mythical Christ. We then get two characters as far asunder as are the two poles, but each consistent with itself.

That disposes of all the many difficulties which scholars have hitherto vainly tried to solve; but, of course, it also disposes of the authenticity of the Gospels. Here are the two horns of the dilemma. *Either* we admit the claim put forward that the Gospels contain nothing that is doubtful or questionable—in which case we must also admit all the contradictions and inconsistencies ascribed to Jesus; *or* we must assume the possibility of error on the part of some unknown scribes who are responsible for the gospel narratives.

Renan—in common with others, of whatever school of thought—accepted the former of the two hypotheses, but without succeeding in making sense of the Gospels. As we have seen, he is content to accept all the consequences of the step, and makes out Jesus to have been a sly, cunning, crafty, self-seeking, ambitious Oriental. Of the other Jesus, who is the very opposite of all this, he gets rid by allowing that at first he may have been sincere, that he “only became a thaumaturgist late in life and against his own inclinations . . .” and that “In a general sense, therefore, it may be truly said that Jesus was a thaumaturgist and exorcist in spite of himself.” Renan thus—unconsciously, perhaps—maintains the integrity of the Gospels by sacrificing him of whom they are testifying. But, in so doing, he is cutting off the branch that is supporting him. One cannot reject the evidence of a witness and yet retain confidence in his trustworthiness.

The fact is, we cannot retain confidence in the authors of the Gospels *and* in Jesus at the same time. Jesus, so far, has been condemned unheard. Yet a very simple and most effective defence on his behalf is possible—an *alibi*, in fact. But that we shall reserve for a subsequent chapter.

## CHAPTER VI

### ORIGIN OF THE CHRIST-MYTH

IN a work of archæological exploration—which the present enterprise so closely resembles—there can be no fixed plan or method of procedure. We dig, examine, and reflect on each new fact as it comes to light.

We have found so far—in the language of our metaphor—the solid foundations of an ancient temple, for the most part buried beneath a mass of accumulated rubble, surmounted by strange altars, tabernacles, and shrines, all in honour of some prophet, god, or idol, represented by a different icon in each, no two alike, and often without any resemblance or apparent relationship with each other beyond the identity of name under which these images are worshipped.

Already we have seen that there is no connection whatever between the flimsy fabrics which crown the mound and the foundations that are buried under it. Here and there, scattered among these shrines, may be seen jutting out a buttress, a pillar, or a portion of massive masonry; but these are in no wise connected with the former, and only serve to emphasize the great contrast between them.

The question that naturally forces itself on the mind is, How came these worshippers to be attracted to just this spot, to erect their altars and to preach their jarring and discordant doctrines on the ruins of the Temple of Peace and Concord, to which their mind-cramping creeds are such perfect strangers? Or, to drop the metaphor, how came these quarrelsome sectarians—for already in the days of Paul and Peter there were serious dissensions and reciprocal anathemas—to select as their prophet a

teacher whose every word seemed to say to these disputing, wrangling, sacerdotal fanatics, "Depart from me, ye who work iniquity, for I know ye not"?

Before we may hope to find an answer to this question, we shall have to solve another problem. If it was not Jesus who attracted these worshippers, who was it? Who is the author of the other, the dominant philosophy in the Gospels? And how came it to be fathered on Jesus, to whose teaching it was so radically opposed? And lastly, who was it who declared Jesus to be "both Lord and Christ"?

That it was not Jesus himself we may safely conclude from the few relics of his teaching that have been preserved for us. Nor is it possible to believe that he would have tolerated any such distinction to be conferred on himself by others. That would have meant the negation of all that he taught and strove and died for, and would have stamped him the insincere adventurer Renan thought him to have been. We may dismiss the idea without further argument; for such a character could not have been the author of the Sermon on the Mount or of the Parable of the Last Judgment.

The truth is—as we shall presently learn—that there was no "Christ" and there were no "Christians" during the lifetime of Jesus, and his Messiahship was not thought of until *many years after the death of Jesus* it occurred to the fertile brain of one Saul or Paul, a tentmaker from Tarsus, that "this Jesus whom the Jews have crucified" was the promised Messiah.

The tale is told in the Acts of the Apostles and by Paul himself in the Epistles that bear his name. If we study these writings, the history of the Christ-myth can be traced to its very inception, and its evolution may then be followed step by step, down to our own times.

But to be able to do so we must detach our mind from notions that have been indoctrinated into us from infancy, and which we have been in the habit of looking upon as facts beyond doubt or cavil. It is the common belief, for instance, that the Gospels are the oldest documents of the New Testament writings. We shall have to dis-



miss that theory as altogether untenable.<sup>1</sup> I shall not stop now to prove this contention, for as our investigation is proceeding, fact after fact will be uncovered which will prove beyond doubt that—with Revelation as the only possible exception—the Gospels are the most recent and the Epistles of Paul the oldest of the New Testament writings. (Excepting, of course, the few ancient relics from the gospel of Jesus which the evangelists have incorporated in their works, and which are older than either.)

This view creates an entirely new situation. It enables us to identify Paul as the author of the Christ-myth and the founder of Christianity. It is he—as we shall see—who first conceived the idea that Jesus was Christ, and who built so vast a superstructure on so weak a foundation. For, let it be noted, the only evidence on which Paul relied to prove his basic “fact” is—Scripture evidence! His method was to quote some passage from the prophets (after the manner of the times and in particular of the sect to which he then belonged), assign a meaning to it which it may or may not have had, and then he argued that “this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled,” and *therefore* “this Jesus whom the Jews have crucified is both Lord and Christ.” Why? Because to assume the contrary would mean either that Scripture prophecy could not be depended upon, or that it did not mean what Paul said it did.

It was the general belief among the Biblists of those days that the Scriptures “must needs have been fulfilled”; hence Paul’s contention that if he could establish a prophecy in the Scriptures, he has also proved its fulfilment. Thus he went from place to place, proving *from the Scriptures* that Jesus was Christ.

At Thessalonica, for instance, “where was a synagogue of the Jews, Paul, *as his manner was*, went in unto them, and three sabbath days *reasoned with them out of the Scriptures*, opening and alleging, that *Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead*; and that

<sup>1</sup> I have learnt since the above was written that I am not the first to have made this discovery.

*this Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ.*"<sup>1</sup> Another time, when in Achaia, "he mightily convinced the Jews . . . *showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ.*"<sup>2</sup>

Let there be no mistake about this: *the only evidence on which rests the stupendous assertion that Jesus was Christ, with all that is involved in the theory, is the Biblical evidence of Paul.* There is not a shred of any other admissible evidence in the Bible or in any other writings.

The supposed testimony of eye-witnesses of the baptism by John; the appearance of the star of Bethlehem; all the miracles supposed to have been performed by Jesus himself; the earthquake at his death; the rending of the curtain in the Temple; the eye-witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus; the angels in the empty tomb; the reappearance of Jesus to his apostles; and finally his ascension into heaven in the full view of the multitude, we may all brush aside, *since these were not sufficient to convince Paul himself.* He not only disbelieved it all, but *actually persecuted those who believed it.*

That is, if we suppose, as is commonly accepted, that all these miracles were current already in the days of Paul. This, however, is more than doubtful; for the Gospels in which they are recorded were not written until years—probably generations—after the death of Paul; not, in fact, until the legend of the annunciation and miraculous conception had been established, about which Paul knew nothing.

The belief that Jesus had risen from the dead was held by this sect before Paul joined it. At first strongly opposed to the doctrine of the resurrection, he eventually became a convert to it, and built on that belief his scheme of salvation, as we shall learn more fully further on. On this theory, and not on anything which Jesus ever said or did, rests the whole fabric of Christianity: "For I delivered unto you," said Paul, "first of all *that which I also received*, how that Christ died for our sins *according to the Scriptures.*"<sup>3</sup>

Let it be borne in mind also that it is *the body of Jesus* which these people—including Paul—believed to have

<sup>1</sup> Acts xvii. 1-3.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. xviii. 28.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 3.

come to life again, and that this *belief in the resurrection of the body* was the essential basis of Paul's Christology. This is not mere inference, nor a matter that is arguable. Paul is too explicit to admit of any doubt as to what he considered the "basic fact" of his doctrines. Here are his own words: "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?"

(Let us note here in passing the words "if Christ *be* preached"; i.e. that it was not "Christ" himself who preached it, but others of him.)

"But," Paul goes on to argue, "if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and *if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain*, and your faith is also vain." And again, "For *if the dead rise not*, then is not Christ raised; and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ perished" (1 Cor. xv. 12-18).

This is a fair specimen of the "mighty arguments" with which Paul convinced his followers, and testifies to the degree of intelligence of both teacher and disciples. One thing is clear, however: all his deductions depended on the truth of the resurrection. If there is no resurrection, then Christ could not have risen; and if Christ is not risen, then Paul has built on sand.

That, however, is of secondary importance only at present. The point I desire to make is that the Christ idea had not been current until after the death of Jesus, and that therefore Jesus could have had no share in its promulgation. The evidence of this will appear in the succeeding chapters.

## CHAPTER VII

## THE GOSPEL OF PAUL

It is not difficult to trace Paul's conversion and the genesis of his philosophy out of his own writings. His mind at the time when he journeyed to Damascus was obsessed by two sets of ideas—the heresy of the Nazarenes and the Scriptures. As his zeal drove him from place to place hunting for heretics, his restless brain must have been actively searching the Scriptures for arguments to confound these dissenters from orthodoxy, with the result—as happens so often in like circumstances—that suddenly the other side of the shield flashed into view and gave a new direction to his thoughts.

He was present at the stoning of Stephen, and heard the latter's defence of his belief. He must have listened to many such speeches and arguments (based on Scripture texts) from those of the sect whom he hunted down and dragged before the priestly tribunals. Their arguments are bound to have left impressions on his mind, which gradually would create doubts as to his own beliefs.

If at any time such a doubt arose in Paul's mind—and we know that it did arise—there was but one way of settling it; namely by the Scriptures.

We have seen what were Paul's conclusions and the kind of arguments on which these were based. The Messiah, it occurred to him, *had* been promised; *therefore* that promise "needs must have been fulfilled." There was no getting over that "fact." Not only had Paul nothing more substantial to start with or to build upon, but it would have been quite impossible to suggest to him anything more convincing or reliable than Scripture prophecy.

For him—at that time—there was, and there could be, no more solid fact.<sup>1</sup>

Once such a thought has taken root in a mind like Paul's, all the rest is bound to follow as mere matter of logic. There is no objection that cannot be met, nor contradiction that cannot be explained—*according to the Scriptures*. The Messiah had been promised, so that promise must have been fulfilled.

But who was the Messiah? There seems to have been some doubt at first whether this distinction belonged to John the Baptist or to Jesus. It was settled, if not by Paul then by someone before him, in the only way in which everything relating to Christ has been settled from the days of Paul down to our own time: "It is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee."<sup>2</sup> That settled it. John came first, so he was the messenger and *therefore* Jesus was the Messiah.

But no sooner had one such difficulty been solved than others cropped up, which kept Paul busy all his life—and others after him to the present day. It was satisfactorily settled that Jesus was Christ the Saviour. But, being Saviour, he should have saved. He died, however, and left things pretty much as he found them. Shall it be said then that Christ has failed in his mission? "God forbid," says Paul; let us search the Scriptures.

Paul never went to that oracle in vain. He discovered what till then had been hidden from all the wise, Jesus included, that in and through Adam all have sinned: and so he argued that "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."<sup>3</sup> "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."<sup>4</sup> *Therefore* Jesus saved us by dying for our sins. His death was the act of salvation: he gave himself as a ransom. Not, however, for everybody, but for those only who believed in him. This limitation was obviously necessary, or there

<sup>1</sup> In later years he substituted his own gospel for the Scriptures.

<sup>2</sup> Mark i. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. v. 19.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 21-2.

would have been no further need for Paul or his gospel. Salvation, therefore, was made conditional on belief in the gospel of Paul. Mankind were still in their sins, notwithstanding the ransom; but by "believing" and by "baptism" anybody could bring himself within the operation of this "new dispensation." This is where "faith" came in, and explains the necessity for the strangest of all doctrines, that *faith* counts for more than works. From such reasoning it follows almost as a logical necessity that "he who believes and is baptized shall be saved, and he who believes not shall be damned."

In this way Paul solved difficulty after difficulty, built up by successive stages his theory of salvation, and established his own authority above all else, in the end even over the Scriptures.

There were disappointments which, in the case of a less resourceful dialectician, might have proved fatal to such reasoning. His deductions did not always work out in fact as logic led him to anticipate. "Salvation," he taught, meant exemption from death. But nevertheless some of his "saints" died just like other folks. Such contrariness did not perturb Paul's faith in his own deductions any more than it would affect a theologian of to-day. The incident merely required explaining; and Paul "proved," quite satisfactorily it seems, to his misled followers, that in their case death was only a quickening process to prepare them for the new kingdom. "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."<sup>1</sup>

Thus what to most men would have meant a crushing defeat, Paul turned into a victory which enabled him to

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 51-54.

comfort his doubting followers. "For this we say unto you *by the word of the Lord*,<sup>1</sup> that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and *the dead in Christ shall rise first*. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord."<sup>2</sup>

So that those who "are fallen asleep in the Lord" actually had a slight advantage over those who remained; for they, being already in possession of their new and incorruptible bodies, will have precedence over the others. "Wherefore comfort one another with these words"<sup>3</sup>

The "comfort of these words" seems still necessary after about eighteen centuries of waiting!

Many other such difficulties cropped up, one after the other, but they all had to yield to Paul's irresistible logic. Whenever the facts were against his conclusions, so much the worse for the facts. And the Scriptures, the source of his inspiration and his sole authority, fared no better. When, for instance, he was spurned by the Jews (among whom he had only a scant following) and had to turn to the "heathen" to get a hearing—though still insisting on "the Jew first"—he had neither difficulty nor scruples in "proving" that "uncircumcision was no bar to salvation," *since the law no longer applied*. For, he argued, "if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void and the *promise* made of none effect."<sup>4</sup>

What "promise"? One made by Jesus? Far from it. Jesus is never so much as quoted by this self-appointed apostle of "Christ."<sup>5</sup> It is another Scripture text which he had unearthed—a "prophecy"—that had not the slightest bearing on the matter he was discussing,

<sup>1</sup> Clearly, the "audacity" which Renan imputed to Jesus must be ascribed to Paul, the self-appointed ambassador of God.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Thess. iv. 15-17

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 18.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. iv. 14.

<sup>5</sup> In Acts xx. 35 Paul is represented as quoting from Jesus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." But nowhere in his epistles does he quote him.

and the sole office of which was to lend support to his fanciful theories. Here is the "promise" as quoted by Paul: "As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations" <sup>1</sup> *Therefore*, argues Paul, "if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void and the promise to Abraham of none effect."

In this wise he argued difficulties out of his way, showing *from the Scriptures* how this or that proposition of his must needs be so, until, by a master-stroke, he proved—from the Scriptures—that the Scriptures were no longer of any account at all: "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." <sup>2</sup> "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." <sup>3</sup> "But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." <sup>4</sup> "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law." <sup>5</sup> *Therefore* we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." <sup>6</sup> "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." <sup>7</sup>

This is the way Paul met the objections of the Jews when they opposed the Scriptures to his teachings. Not being able to meet their arguments, he got rid of the Scriptures themselves. The old "covenant" has lapsed and a new one has taken its place. "In that he (God) says, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." <sup>8</sup> "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law." <sup>9</sup> "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ." <sup>10</sup>

Then what has taken its place? I will let Paul himself answer this question: "Remember that *Jesus Christ* of the seed of David was raised from the dead *according to my gospel*." <sup>11</sup> No longer, be it noted, "according to the

<sup>1</sup> Rom. iv. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. vii. 6.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. vi. 14.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. iii. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. x. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Heb. vii. 12.

<sup>8</sup> Heb. viii. 13.

<sup>11</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. x. 13

<sup>6</sup> Rom. iii. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Gal. iii. 13.



Scriptures," but "according to *my* gospel." "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ *according to my gospel.*" <sup>1</sup> "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that *which we have preached unto you*, let him be accursed." <sup>2</sup>

Whence had Paul his gospel, for which he claimed such authority that he would tolerate no interference with its decrees even by an angel from heaven? I will again let Paul give his own answer: "I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but *by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*" <sup>3</sup>

In a trance, that is; for, as we shall presently see, Paul never had any communication with Jesus himself either directly or indirectly; never even troubled to inform himself what Jesus taught by consulting those who might have known. Indeed, it is his boast that his knowledge is all derived by "inspiration." Here are his own words: "I conferred not with flesh and blood, neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me." <sup>4</sup> Again, "It pleased God . . . to reveal his Son *in* me, that I might preach him among the heathen." <sup>5</sup> (Note that the Son was "revealed *in* me" and not "to me.")

We cannot know, of course, what communications Paul had with God; but we can prove for certain that he had none with Jesus; for his conversion did not take place until after the death of Jesus. How long after may be surmised from a statement of Paul's to the Corinthians: "He (Jesus) was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that he was seen of *above five hundred brethren* at once: of whom *the greater part remain unto this present*, but some are fallen asleep." <sup>6</sup>

All these are cited as witnesses to the *resurrection* of Jesus, so they are witnesses of the *resurrected Christ* only. There is no mention of any one of them having known Jesus when still living. Now, whatever may be the value

<sup>1</sup> Rom. ii 16

<sup>2</sup> Gal. i. 8

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. i. 12.

<sup>4</sup> Gal. i. 16-17.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. i. 15-16.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Cor xv. 5-6.

of their testimony in this connection, it is good evidence that Jesus had been dead at the time when there was a sect in existence of "above five hundred brethren" whom Paul had persecuted,<sup>1</sup> which again is good evidence that Paul did not join them until years after, when "some had fallen asleep."

What this sect was we shall learn in a subsequent chapter. They evidently were among those who believed in the resurrection of the body, a doctrine which, according to Josephus, was held by some of the Jewish sects. Some of these evidently believed that Jesus had risen. The disappearance of his body—removed probably by his friends so as to protect it against desecration by his enemies—may have given rise to this belief. The memory of Jesus was held in reverence by many of the Essenes, and particularly by the "Nazarenes," as the sect was called when Paul joined it.<sup>2</sup> But he was not known to them as "Christ," and they were not known as "Christians," until after Paul had become a convert and succeeded in convincing *some* of them of his theories, as is plainly set forth in Acts xi. 25-6:—

"Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Paul: and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And it came to pass, that a *whole year* they assembled themselves with the church [of the Nazarenes], and *taught much people*. And the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch."<sup>3</sup> The "disciples" were those of Paul, of course.

It is as plainly established, therefore, as any fact in history can be established, that it was Paul who conceived the idea of the "Christ," and that this must have happened many years after the death of Jesus.

When, therefore, Paul claims to have received his apostleship directly from "Jesus Christ," it must be understood that he refers to the Christ of his hallucina-

<sup>1</sup> "For ye have heard . . . in time past . . . how that beyond measure I persecuted the Church of God and wasted it" (Gal. i. 13).

<sup>2</sup> "For we have found this man (Paul) . . . a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes" (Acts xxiv. 5).

<sup>3</sup> Acts xi. 25-6.

tions, and not to the real Jesus, whom he had never met. Indeed, it is highly doubtful whether Jesus and Paul were contemporaries.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I base this statement on the following considerations. The stoning of Stephen must have taken place some years *after the death of Jesus*, for at that time already there was "a church which was at Jerusalem" (Acts viii. 1). Paul, who was present at this stoning, was then "a youth," who looked after the garments of those who performed the stoning. Much later—that is, when he arrived at manhood's estate—Paul *persecuted* the Nazarenes, and must have been fairly advanced in age when he became a convert himself; for he says of himself (1 Cor. xv. 8) that he "was born out of due time"—i.e. late in age. (Cf. also *Philemon* v. 9, "Paul the *aged*.") Now, the "youth" could scarcely have been described as such had he been older than say twenty years; and Paul could hardly have been less than forty years at the time of his conversion. This makes twenty years between the stoning of Stephen and the conversion of Paul. To this would have to be added the years which elapsed between the crucifixion of Jesus and the stoning of Stephen.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE GOSPEL OF JESUS

PAUL, if not the actual originator of the Christ-myth, was certainly the author of the Christian scheme of salvation, which in every essential is the antithesis of the teachings of Jesus.

It will be interesting here to contrast this gospel of Paul with that of Jesus.

We possess an excellent summary of the latter in the Parable of the Last Judgment, which I will quote in full :—

“ And before him [*the King*] shall be gathered all nations : and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

“ Then shall the *King* say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world : for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me in : naked, and ye clothed me : I was sick, and ye visited me : I was in prison and ye came unto me.

“ Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee ? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink ? Or when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in ? Or naked, and clothed thee ? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee ?

“ And the *King* shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Not unto Jesus, that is, but unto the “ *King* ” who is the speaker in the parable.

"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

"Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

"Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."<sup>1</sup>

As may readily be seen, in all that is essential this parable is the very antithesis of the philosophy of Paul. On the other hand, the reader will not fail to note the remarkable agreement of this parable, down to the minutest detail, with the narratives already quoted; not only as regards doctrine, but also in respect of style and diction.

Paul was a mystic, ever harking after the supernatural, the mysterious, and the miraculous. We find nothing of the kind in Jesus. All his utterances relate to the mundane affairs of man. His parables are all centred around some familiar, homely event that appeals to the understanding; and the lesson is always such that it is difficult to withhold our approval or assent.

Though there are many lessons crowded into this parable, the one which—by way of contrast with the teachings of Paul—is perhaps more obtrusively manifest than any other is the implied scheme of "salvation."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxv. 32-45.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Rom. x. 13. This and many other such words have been invested with theological meanings they were not intended originally to convey. As our inquiry proceeds, many such words will contextually receive more rational interpretations. Others, when needed, will be explained philologically. But it is not convenient constantly to interrupt an argument for the purpose of showing how words have been mistranslated or misinterpreted so as to make them fit in with doctrinal theology. Jesus certainly did not understand by "salvation" transportation to a kingdom in the clouds, as has already been explained and as will abundantly appear in due course.

According to Paul, anybody might save himself most easily by "believing on the Lord Jesus Christ according to my gospel," quite regardless of what became of the rest of mankind.

According to Jesus, you cannot save yourself at all, except only by saving others. Those who seek to save themselves, heedless as to what befalls their neighbours, are merely pursuing a will-o'-the-wisp. This is the meaning of that seeming paradox that "Whosoever will seek his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life *because of me* shall find it."<sup>1</sup> We shall presently see that this is not mere sentiment, but a necessary truth. It means that you cannot save yourself by fasting, incantations, or that form of almsgiving which is of the nature of a bribe to the gods. Your individual safety is bound up with that of your neighbours. Therefore to save yourself you must see to it that there shall be none neglected or oppressed; that there are no pitfalls (or temptations), and that none are menaced. In short, you can assure your own salvation only by making sure that none need perish.

Another remarkable feature of the parable is the surprise of both the "blessed" and the "condemned"; for apparently neither of them expected things to turn out as they did. The wonder is, how this lesson could have remained all these centuries buried in the Gospels unnoticed and unheeded.

The "blessed" were quite unaware of having done anything meritorious. They probably were simple folk who attended to the daily affairs of life, feeding and clothing those dependent on them, and giving help where such was needed; not with any ulterior motive or expectation of reward, but just as part of the daily round of duties. And as part of those duties they fed the hungry, clothed the naked, succoured the weak, and comforted

<sup>1</sup> "Because of me," i.e. in consequence of my teachings, or by obeying these "laws" which I preach unto you. The Greek words are *ἐνεκεν ἐμοῦ*, which have been translated "for my sake"; a rendering which is agreeable to Pauline theology, but quite inconsistent with the character and teachings of Jesus, and not warranted by the context.

those that mourned. It was these deeds that constituted them "the blessed of the Father." We are not told of any other merits of theirs, whether they ever attended the synagogue or whether they were Jews even.

There is again no mention about "faith," which is so strong a point with Paul; no mention about Paul's or anybody else's gospel; about Adam's "fall" or a "promise" to Abraham; nor about "believing on the Lord Jesus Christ."

Just as the "blessed" were rewarded in virtue only of their good deeds towards their fellow-men, and without reference to their creed, sect, or nationality, so the others were condemned solely because they did not attend to the needs of their neighbours. For aught we know to the contrary, the "blessed" may have been Gentiles who never attended a synagogue; and the "cursed" pious Jews—priests and Levites—who spent most of their time in prayer and in fasting. Of such little account did Jesus consider these rites that—as on other occasions—he did not even mention them; may be so as to give greater prominence to the importance of good works, so little thought of by Paul.

But, I hear the reader ask, if this is as you say, what was the *religion* of Jesus? Was he a *secularist*?

I desire the reader to note the antithesis suggested by the two words and then to reflect why or whence that implied contrast. When he has found the answer, it will be the severest indictment of the Churches that have created this antithesis and a complete condemnation of their pseudo-religion.

If we turn to the dictionary we find the word "secular" thus defined: "pertaining to this present world, or to things not spiritual or holy; relating to things not immediately or primarily respecting the soul, but the body; worldly; temporal."

It is quite obvious that theology is responsible for this definition. "Religion" and the "affairs of life"; "holiness" and "temporal duties"; "body" and "soul"; "piety" and "duty": these have not only been divorced, but made antagonistic: with the result that a religion

and a piety have been evolved that are the consummation of selfishness.

To prove this we need only contemplate a piety as free from "worldliness" as conditions of life permit—say that of a Saint Simon Stylites—and the result will be, not a *saint* but an *anchorite*; a person who has renounced this world with all its duties, who has debased even his own body, in the hope of thus being able to *save his own soul*. As if such a pitiful human wreck could have any soul left worth the saving!

I am aware that no sane person is likely to carry his fervour so far as the anchorite I am contemplating. Yet the latter would but carry to its logical conclusion the doctrine which denounces this world and its duties as "temporal" or "secular" in opposition to what the Churches consider as "spiritual" or "religious." The result is not "saintliness," but selfishness run mad.

There is a counterpart to such a "saint." It is the self-indulgent, pleasure-seeking, sensuous egotist who cares as little about what becomes of the rest of mankind in this world as the anchorite cares about their fate in the next. They are the two extremes of a false conception of existence, actuated by like motives. The anchorite sacrifices the pleasures of this world as a price for future and eternal bliss; and the "worldling" who does not believe in the future life is trying to get what "pleasures" he can out of this. Each of them is trying to get *the most for himself*; they differ only in taking opposite chances. That there are duties in this present world which are sacred *because* pertaining to this present life, does not occur to either; and in consequence both are classed in the parable among "the cursed."

If the parable teaches anything at all, it is this, that of all the iniquities and abominations none is greater than the doctrine which would divorce the duties of this life and of this world from religion, or would stigmatize such duties as "secular," "temporal" or "worldly," in opposition to "holy," "spiritual," or "religious." The classification is an erroneous one, based as it is on false conceptions of life, duty, and religion. Not that which is



secular or temporal is opposed to religion, but that which is *sordid*, *selfish*, and *iniquitous*. This is the criterion that is decisive in the Parable of the Last Judgment. The whole religion of Jesus consists in "temporal" or "secular" duties, and of course could consist in nothing else.<sup>1</sup> The aphorism of "serving God rather than man" is but an easy way of trying to escape one's duties.

*You cannot serve God save by serving his children*, is taught by Jesus. Your praise is blasphemy; your gifts, if given as bribes for future rewards, sacrilege; and your fasts hypocrisy. The essence of religion is this. "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these, you have done it unto me."

To live a life of love, of justice, of mercy, of forbearing and forgiving, helping the weak, succouring the needy, seeing in each fellow-creature a child of the "Father which is in heaven," sanctifying that Fatherhood by recognizing your brotherhood, is *not* worldliness, but righteousness; and to neglect these duties and to devote all your time and thought to praying to God for *your own welfare* is not "spiritual" or "holy," but sordid and selfish.

The Parable of the Last Judgment leaves no room for doubt as to what constituted righteousness in the eyes of Jesus.

Long habit of thought and association of ideas have invested the words "religion," "spiritual," and "pious" with a theological flavour that assigns to them meanings that are opposite to "secular," "temporal," or "worldly." But, as I have already pointed out, the life of a praying and fasting anchorite may be as sordid and selfish as that of the sensuous egotist; whilst a person who never goes to church or chapel may—*notwithstanding*—be unselfish, religious, and "spiritual" in the strict sense approved by the reputed founder of Christianity.

Let me visualize my meaning. Let us take one of

<sup>1</sup> Jesus desired to establish on earth what Paul hoped to find in the clouds. It is difficult to detect any other difference between the "spiritual" of Paul and what the Churches denounce as "temporal" or "secular."

each group of the "saints" and "sinners" of the Parable of the Last Judgment, and in imagination observe each in the performance of those characteristic acts which resulted in such unexpected awards. I will choose the priest and the Samaritan of that other parable for the purpose. It is not necessary to assume that the priest was cruel or callous. Maybe he was preoccupied with what he considered his duty to God. Maybe he was hastening to the synagogue, where a congregation was awaiting him to conduct divine service, and in mind was rehearsing the prayer he was going to offer. Whatever the reasons, "he passed by on the other side."

Then comes the Samaritan, bent on "worldly" business, carrying some oil to market, thinking how to dispose of it and what to buy with the proceeds, so as best to meet the needs of his household. He also sees the poor man, stops, succours him, pours oil into his wounds, ties them up, then raises the patient's head with his left arm, and with his right hand offers him to drink. I want your mind to catch him in this attitude, bent over the sufferer, compassion in his eyes, but no thought of temple, psalms, or God, his whole and sole concern for the moment being how to help a stricken-down fellow-being.

And now behold the priest, decked out in his canonicals, in front of the draped altar, with hands raised and eyes upturned, chanting the praises of God; not hypocritically, but with all the fervour and devotion of a man who is convinced that on the due performance of these rites depends the salvation of—*his own soul*.

Compare now priest and Samaritan, the former concerned about his own soul, the latter about his stricken-down neighbour, and then tell me which of the two is the "religious" and which the "secular" act? Compare the loud chantings of the priest and congregation with the silent thanksgiving that beams from the grateful eyes of the sufferer. What prayer, what hymn of praise could tongue compose or lips recite to equal it? Would you, after these reflections, still call the service of the priest "divine" and that of the Samaritan "secular" or "worldly"?

I grant that, to the eye, the priest's is the prettier picture. The priest's religion is also much the easier to follow. But do not tell me that it is the "warmer," or that it can satisfy that secret yearning of a truly devout soul which seeks happiness in the consciousness of having done its duty.

Do not misunderstand me. I am not speaking against church or priest. Far from it. Both have a mission, *and a sacred one*, of which I intend to speak by and by. It is their errors I am trying to expose. It is good for people to congregate and to join in prayer, in communion of thought and of sentiment. Such acts stimulate religion, but are not religious in themselves. They may be *aids* to religion, but cannot be *substitutes* for it.

Go to church by all means. But if you would send a hymn to God that shall be acceptable and the acceptance of which you shall feel in your heart, take home with you that hungry mother with the half-starved infant in her arms standing at the street corner in the hope of an alms. Feed the child and then watch the mother's eyes. Hymn after hymn will thence ascend, and the *divine spirit in your own heart* will receive and respond to this eloquent though silent prayer. And although never a sound is uttered, there will come the response to you: "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me."

But your duty does not end with feeding mother and child and dismissing them with a present, however munificent. You cannot *buy* your salvation in this easy fashion. You will have to find out the *cause* of that woman's distress, and if it be due to some *social wrong* or some *social institution*, then the fault is at your own door. No amount of praying can relieve you of the duty to help to remove the iniquity through which that woman has been reduced to that pitiable plight. Nor can you be safe yourself while that pitfall is allowed to remain.

\*             \*             \*             \*             \*

There is an unmistakable correspondence between the character of Paul and his teachings, as there is between

the character and teachings of Jesus. But there is no correspondence whatever, nor any point of contact, between the two philosophies or the characters of their respective authors.

Whether we compare their lives, doctrines, or trains of thought, Paul is in every respect the antithesis of Jesus. Paul was austere, narrow-minded, bigoted, doctrinaire, superstitious, and intolerant. Jesus was in every respect the opposite.

Paul cursed those who dared differ from him ;<sup>1</sup> Jesus enjoined "love your enemies"—and practised it, too.

"He that *doeth* the will of my Father which is in heaven" was the formula of Jesus ; "He that *believeth* on the Lord Jesus Christ" was the formula of Paul.

Paul believed in the efficacy of oaths, and thought it necessary even for God so to confirm his promises.<sup>2</sup> Jesus said, "Swear not at all . . . but let your communications be Yea, yea ; Nay, nay : for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."<sup>3</sup>

Paul's God was jealous and vindictive (Heb. iv. 12), from whose *wrath* he endeavoured to save *the elect*. Jesus knew no such vindictive deity. His God was a loving Father, who sendeth his rain on the just and on the unjust, and who "is kind even to the unthankful and to the evil" (Luke vi. 35).

Paul's conception of God and the kingdom of heaven was that of a mighty tyrant and his court. It was a glorious thing to be admitted into the royal presence and to share in all the splendours ; yet everybody dreaded the "furious" king. It is a grossly materialistic conception, borrowed from the garish, pompous court of the voluptuous tyrant whose favours are so much to be desired, and yet so much to be dreaded. For one thing, but few people could ever hope to enter into the royal presence. As on earth, so in heaven : "Many are called, but few are chosen."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gal. i. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. vi. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. v. 34-7.

<sup>4</sup> These words are attributed to Jesus. He may have uttered them, but never with the meaning put on them by the evangelists and theologians generally.

Hence Paul speaks of "saints" or the "elect"; Jesus never uses either of these terms, but speaks of the "righteous" and the "unrighteous," and of both as "the children of the Father."

Paul's sole concern was for his saints. Jesus came to call sinners to repentance.

Paul's reasoning is always specious, superficial, and plausible. Jesus appealed to reason and to the facts of nature. "As it is written . . ." said Paul. "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time . . . but I say unto you" was the form of address used by Jesus.

Paul argued much against the "law," as being no longer of any account. But Jesus, when asked "What must I do to inherit life?" answered, "Obey the law."

Paul is as insistent that "works without faith" are of no avail as Jesus is emphatic that piety of any kind without good deeds in the service of others is useless.

Paul had practically abandoned all hope in a possible uplifting of mankind. "There is none righteous, no, not one."<sup>1</sup> Jesus, on the other hand, believed in the potential goodness of man: "Ye are the salt of the earth"; "Ye are the light of the world." "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

Paul saw no hope for any regeneration. "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified";<sup>2</sup> and the only salvation of mankind he could see was in the atonement of Christ. He did not think it was in man to save himself at all, save through being "ransomed."<sup>3</sup>

According to Jesus there can be no such atonement as is so confidently proclaimed by Paul. You are warned off the altar even, and advised to "agree with thine adversary quickly . . . lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge. . . . Thou shalt by no means

<sup>1</sup> Rom. iii. 10

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. iii. 20

<sup>3</sup> The very idea of ascribing to Jesus such a senseless and mischievous doctrine as that one man's disobedience should be visited on all mankind, or that by merely *believing* in the goodness of someone else people should be able to atone for their own misdeeds, is too monstrous for serious discussion.

come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus we might go on showing that every doctrine or dogma of Paul was a negation of something which Jesus enjoined on mankind as necessary for their regeneration.

Indeed, if it were not for the misuse of terms, Paul might (*mutatis mutandis*) be described as the veritable “Anti-Christ,” in the sense of being an adversary of true religion.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. v. 25-6.

## CHAPTER IX

### SONS OF GOD

PAUL never mentions the virgin mother of Christ, nor alludes to the annunciation, the immaculate conception, the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem, the pilgrimage of the wise men led by a star, etc.; the reason being that these legends had yet to be invented in order to explain the dogma set up by Paul himself that Jesus was "Son of God."

We have seen how Paul and his contemporaries misunderstood and misinterpreted certain phrases, with the result that they expected to be transferred bodily to a new kingdom somewhere in the clouds, whilst heaven and earth would be annihilated. Something similar happened in a later generation, when the meaning of language had changed and new explanations became necessary.

When Paul declared Jesus to be the "Son of God," he meant no more than that God was the "spiritual father."

In Paul's time, "to be begotten of God" or "of the spirit" had a local and sectarian meaning; and for the purpose of being so begotten an earthly mother was no more necessary than an earthly father.<sup>1</sup> James explains the process very tersely in these words: "Of his own will begat he us *with the word of truth*."<sup>2</sup> Everyone so "begotten" was a "son of God."

To understand Paul or the evangelists, we must try to apprehend the meaning they intended to convey by certain words and phrases, instead of interpreting these

<sup>1</sup> Paul says of Melchisedec that he was "without father, without mother, without descent . . . but made like unto the Son of God" (Heb. vii. 3).

<sup>2</sup> James i. 18.

as if their meaning were the same to-day as then. Fortunately we can generally gather from Paul what he meant, as, for instance . " There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. . . . Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and *afterward* that which is spiritual."

Paul, in accordance with then current conceptions, conceived man in a dual character. He was first of all " born of the flesh " and " in corruption " ; and later he stood a chance of being " born of the spirit." This was with Paul and his associates no mere figure of speech, but a reality. Thus Paul speaks of " My kinsman according to the flesh " ;<sup>1</sup> and although he was not married, and a confirmed misogynist, yet he speaks of " Timotheus, who is my beloved son "—the explanation for which we find in a preceding verse: " For though ye have many instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus *I have begotten you through the gospel.*"<sup>2</sup>

In like manner Paul conceived Christ to have been " begotten of God," as is sufficiently clear from the following statement: " Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was *made of the seed of David according to the flesh*; and *declared to be the Son of God . . . according to the spirit of holiness, BY THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.*"<sup>3</sup>

It was a cardinal doctrine with this sect—which was founded probably by John the Baptist—that man had to be " born again " of the spirit in order to become holy and fit to be saved. The first or natural birth was that of " corruptible seed." The *true* birth, according to them, was that of the *spirit* (" pneuma "), which was incorruptible, and which was accomplished by baptism and the laying on of hands. The following quotations are sufficiently clear and to the point:—

" Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rom. ix 3

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor iv. 15-17. Cf. also Philem 10-11: " . . . my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds," i.e. converted while in prison. Paul was to Onesimus what is called nowadays " godfather."

<sup>3</sup> Rom. i. 3-4.

<sup>4</sup> John iii. 3.



"Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit is spirit." <sup>1</sup>

"Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." <sup>2</sup>

Peter likewise thanks God in these words for a like mercy :—

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." <sup>3</sup>

"Being born again, *not of corruptible seed*, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." <sup>4</sup>

"So that they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit." <sup>5</sup>

"For as many as are led by the spirit of God, *they are the sons of God.*" <sup>6</sup>

"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." <sup>7</sup>

"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." <sup>8</sup>

Paul, it would seem, was an old man when he joined the sect, for he refers to the event in these words :—

"He (Jesus) was seen of me also, *as one born out of due time.*" <sup>9</sup>

From which it will be seen that to be "begotten by God" was not so great a miracle after all. In those days it was quite an everyday occurrence. To-day we call it "baptism" or "confirmation."

It must not be supposed, however, that these phrases

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 5-6.

<sup>2</sup> John i. 13. These words are put into the mouth of Jesus by the evangelist, although there is evidence even in this Gospel that Jesus was not a member of this particular sect, and could certainly never have spoken these words.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Pet. i. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 23.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. viii. 8-9.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. viii. 14.

<sup>7</sup> 1 John iii. 9.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. iii. 1.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 8. Seen in "spirit," of course, on his way to Damascus.

were used merely in an allegorical sense by these children of faith. They actually believed that a new birth—a spiritual birth—took place, and counted the age of their saints from that day. Indeed, Paul goes so far as to declare the account of Abraham having had two sons, one by a bondmaid and the other by a freewoman, to have been “an allegory,”<sup>1</sup> the true meaning being, according to him, “. . . he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.”<sup>2</sup>

The “spirit,” which according to the general belief of the time was an entity like the body, though distinct from it, was held by these people to be the real thing. What place the body occupied in their philosophy it is difficult to surmise, for though they speak of “spirit” and “spiritual birth,” and believed that the “spirit” could come and go, and be exchanged for an entirely different one, they did not seem to have been able to think of life or existence apart from the body. Whenever mention is made of resurrection, it is always a resurrection of the body.

The “spirit” was the real inner man, and in the “saints” was begotten of God. There was nothing strained, therefore, in their idea of a spiritual birth. A saint could expel an evil spirit in one that was worthy and confer the “holy spirit.” We read, for instance, in Acts: “When Paul laid his hands on them, the holy *spirit* came on them.”<sup>3</sup>

On the face of it, there is the strong suggestion that Jesus was “begotten of God” in like manner as were Peter, Paul, and all the rest of them. Against that, however, we have the circumstantial account of the miraculous conception and the birth of Jesus in Matthew and in Luke, which does not admit of any such explanation. The writers of these accounts, at any rate, believed in the miraculous birth of the *body* of Jesus. But that need not embarrass us, as it only proves that at the time when

<sup>1</sup> Gal. iv. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. iv. 23

<sup>3</sup> Acts xix. 6. The English version says “the Holy Ghost.” But there is no word in the Greek corresponding to “Ghost.”

these Gospels were written the legend concerning the miraculous birth of Jesus had already been established and was believed in by the authors of those Gospels

This fact, however, proves something quite different than the truth of the miracle. It proves that if it was Paul who established—if not actually originated—the idea that “this Jesus was Christ,” that in that case the said Gospel could not have been written until after the theories of Paul had been established. In other words, that *the said Gospel must be post-Pauline*.

We may dismiss, so far as Paul is concerned, the legend about the miraculous birth of Jesus. He had no need for such a theory. His words are sufficiently explicit when he says (Rom. i 3-4). “. . . Jesus Christ our Lord . . . was made of the seed of David *according to the flesh*, and declared to be the Son of God . . . *according to the spirit of holiness*, BY THE RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD.” (This “spirit of holiness,” by the way, is elsewhere phrased “holy spirit,” and when in this form it is translated as “Holy Ghost”—except where such rendering might clash with theological conceptions; as, for instance, in Matt. xii. 28, Rom viii. 9, etc.).

Far from contending that Jesus had no natural father, it was essential that he should have one; for it was of the utmost importance to Paul to establish his direct descent from David, as was required by the prophecy. It was essential to prove that Jesus was of the seed of David; for, as John exclaims so dramatically, “Hath not the Scripture said that Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of Bethlehem where David was?”<sup>1</sup> Hence the importance of the genealogy of Joseph, which would not have been required had Joseph not been regarded as the father “according to the flesh.” Hence also, no doubt, the story of the journey of Joseph and Mary to Jerusalem, so that on the way thither the birth should happen in Bethlehem, “For it is written by the prophet, And thou, Bethlehem . . .”<sup>2</sup> etc.

Indeed, it seems that the gravest objection of the Jews to Paul's contention that Jesus was Christ was just the

<sup>1</sup> John vii. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. ii. 5-6.

question of descent, for we find him more than once arguing this very point; <sup>1</sup> and in his Epistle to Titus there occurs the following significant passage. "Avoid foolish questions about genealogies, and contentions . . ." etc <sup>3</sup> Paul evidently had some trouble in proving that Jesus was of the seed of David

On the other hand, no allusion is ever made by Paul to the virgin mother or to the miraculous conception. Had anything been known to Paul about a supposed supernatural origin of Jesus, it would be surprising—to say the least of it—that he should not have eagerly taken up a doctrine so peculiarly suited to his trend of thought, and one that would have afforded such rare opportunities to his talent of finding Scripture evidence in support of it.

Jesus was one out of many *Sons of God*. John, it is true, speaks of the "only begotten Son of God." But John (or whoever was the author of that Gospel) wrote at a time when actual fatherhood was attributed to God, and the legend about the immaculate conception and a virgin mother had already been established.

Paul, who, as the originator of "the principles and doctrines of Christ," <sup>4</sup> is first authority on this subject, spoke of Jesus as "the first begotten," <sup>5</sup> which presupposes a plurality of "Sons of God." That Paul had such a spiritual birth in his mind, or what to-day would be called "conversion," "baptism," or "confirmation," is abundantly evident from every utterance of his concerning the Christship of Jesus. Thus, God is made to say to Jesus at the time of his "birth," and even prior to it, "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." <sup>6</sup> So that Jesus "loved righteousness and hated iniquity" before he was anointed and before he was made "Son of God," "Captain of Salvation," <sup>7</sup> or "Apostle and High Priest of our profession" <sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> E g at Antioch, Acts xiii. 16-35

<sup>2</sup> iii. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. also 1 Tim. i. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. vi. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid i. 6. Cf. also Rev i. 5. "Jesus Christ, who is . . . the first begotten of the dead, . . ."

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. i. 9.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. ii. 10.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. iii. 1.

He was the first, as he also was the foremost and the highest, "declared to be the Son of God . . . by the resurrection from the dead."<sup>1</sup> So that *prior to the resurrection* Jesus was neither Christ nor Son of God

In Luke iii. 22 it is said that when Jesus was baptized by John "a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased." But according to Paul the words were, "Thou art my Son, *this day* have I begotten thee."<sup>2</sup> And again (Heb. v. 5), "Thou art my Son, *to-day* have I begotten thee." Such words could be addressed to a person only, and not to a being not yet born.

Luke also gives the information that "Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age" at the time, "being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli," etc., tracing the genealogy of Joseph to David.

Dr. F. Blass, in his *Philology of the Gospels*, has some interesting comments on this passage, of which I will quote here the most essential parts only—

"We proceed to the third chapter (of Luke), where the baptism of Christ is told, and in connection with it this genealogy is given. . . . Whence this connection? . . . But if we are to understand this strange sequel we have only to look into 'D.'<sup>3</sup> . . . In the passage in question (iii. 22) the words from heaven are, according to the great bulk of MSS, 'Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.' But according to 'D' and some Latin witnesses (this evidence being supported by Justin and by other Fathers) the words are, 'Thou art my Son, *to-day* have I begotten thee. . . .' Now the words following in Luke are these: 'And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph which was the son of Heli,' and so on. We have seen already that there is no connection between this sequel and the preceding words as they are commonly read; but there is a very clear connection if we take the words given by 'D.' . . . The '*to-day* have I begotten thee' stands in opposition to the thirty years; and the

<sup>1</sup> Rom. 1. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. 1. 5. Cf. also Acts xxi. 33.

<sup>3</sup> A manuscript Gospel of Luke in the Cambridge Library.

'Thou art *my* Son' likewise to 'being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph.' "

This, argues Dr. Blass, after a lengthy comparison of the various texts, is the true reading, and continues—

"I will only point out that the '*began to be*' (verse 23), ἀρχόμενος appears to be a corruption of ἐρχόμενος, 'when he came' "

The difference in the spelling, it will be observed, consists in a single letter—the substitution of *a* for *ε*—the former spelling being found in some manuscripts and the latter in others. Dr. Blass insists that the words "as was supposed" refer both to the thirty years and to the fatherhood of Joseph; and the reading he finally adopts is as follows—

"Jesus was, when he came (to the baptism), about thirty years old, as was supposed, and the son of Joseph . . .," etc.

Or, transcribing it into modern English by help of Pauline phraseology: Jesus the son of Joseph, and through Joseph the son of David after the flesh, was thirty years old when he was "declared to be the Son of God." <sup>1</sup>

This not only makes sense and history of what otherwise is utter and incomprehensible nonsense, but it makes it clear also why the genealogy of Joseph should be given.

This is intelligible only if the fatherhood of Joseph is admitted, as undoubtedly it was by Paul.

Then what—the reader will ask—are we to make of the circumstantial account in Matthew of the annunciation, the dream of Joseph, the magi, the star of Bethlehem, and all the other details relating to the birth of Christ?

These accounts are the evidence referred to, showing that the Gospels in which allusion is made to the supposed miraculous birth could not have been written until years after Paul had established the Christship of Jesus, when such phrases as "being begotten of the spirit" or "Son of God" had lost their original sectarian meaning.

Conceptions changed; the same words no longer conveyed the same ideas, and in consequence new difficulties

<sup>1</sup> According to the evangelist only; for Paul dates the Christship from the resurrection.

arose. The fatherhood of God was taken literally, and the question then arose as to what were the relations of Joseph to Mary. If the latter was with child by the Holy Spirit, would not Joseph doubt her chastity, and as a good Jew put her away, or even make a public example of her?

To believers the answer is almost obvious. There has never been a time when a Bible expositor could not be found to clear up so simple a matter; and so someone on whom had descended the mantle of Paul explained that God, of course, had sent his angel to Joseph in a dream—as God is in the habit of doing in such circumstances—who told him all about it. This explanation would only require confirmation from the Scriptures to make it into a certainty; and sure enough, the “evidence” was found, for lo, “All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child. . .,” etc.<sup>1</sup> *But this must have happened long after Paul had joined those who were asleep in the Lord.*

This is the way in which all the doctrines relating to the Christ-myth have been settled from the time of Paul to this day. A contradiction, a clashing of facts, or some other difficulty is encountered. The implied facts, however absurd, are never questioned. The problem is not how to investigate and to prove or disprove, but how to *explain*; and once a seemingly plausible explanation has been hit upon, to find Scripture evidence in support of it. It is on this principle that Paul proved Jesus to be Christ, that he established the doctrines of the fall of man through Adam and salvation by faith through Christ. It is thus we got the “sacrifice,” the “ransom,” the “atonement,” the “resurrection,” “salvation by faith,” “the virgin mother,” “the Holy Ghost,” “the Trinity,” the “Athanasian creed,” the “Apostles’ creed,” “the Eucharist,” “Apostolic succession,” “Predestination,” “Papal infallibility,” down to the latest dogma of to-day

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 1. 22-3.

## CHAPTER X

### THE "HOLY GHOST"

ANOTHER legend having a like ignoble origin, viz ignorance and superstition, the parents of all such legends—is that concerning the "Holy Ghost," which is always spelt with capital initials as a mark of reverence. I propose to inquire in this chapter Who or What this "Holy Ghost" is that plays such an important part in Christian theology.

The problem is strictly one of philology, and has no more to do with a "person"—spiritual or otherwise—than have Irish "bulls" with the beef supply of England.

The Greek word which in the English Bible is variously rendered as "breath," "wind," "life," "spirit" or "ghost" is "pneuma"; from which is derived the English word "pneumatics" to signify the "science of air."

"Pneuma" (from the root "pneô," "to breathe") signified originally "that which blows or breathes"; hence "breath," "wind," "air in motion"; hence "*that which breathes in us*"; i.e. the "spirit" or "spiritual being" which inhabits the body, and to which have been attributed all the phenomena of life. The metaphrase of the word is to be found in every language, the root-idea being always "to breathe," and has reference to all that pertains to the mystery of "life"; i.e. a breathing being, in contradistinction to one that is not *breathing*, or is breathless, lifeless, or "dead."

Breath ("pneuma") is a word which in philology occupies a place similar to the fossils in geology: it links us up to the remote past and affords us a glimpse of how our ideas, and the words to express them, have originated.



The phenomena of life and death must at all times have been problems of engrossing interest and mystery, and we can well understand how primitive man would fasten on to "breath" as the distinguishing mark of *life* and *living*. To this day non-medical men diagnose the extinction of life by the cessation of breathing. The identification of *breath* with *wind* would seem to untutored, primitive man as self-evident as was the "rising" and the "setting" of the sun. Thus in Genesis it says that "The *ruach* [i.e. the wind] of God moved upon the face of the waters", the word "*ruach*" being rendered in English—quite correctly—by "spirit". But in Hebrew not only were both ideas expressed by the same word, but "wind" and "breath" were considered one and the same thing.<sup>1</sup>

In modern English we have quite a number of words which stand for as many more or less distinct ideas, all of which would be represented in ancient Greek—or at least in gospel Greek—by the word "*pneuma*," with or without some qualifying words. In the following quotations from the New Testament the words "breath," "wind," "life," "spirit," "ghost" are as many renderings of "*pneuma*" —

"Seeing he giveth to all life and *breath*" ;<sup>2</sup>

"The *wind bloweth* where it listeth" ;<sup>3</sup>

"And had power to give *life* unto the image of the beast" ;<sup>4</sup>

"Lord Jesus, receive my *spirit*" ;<sup>5</sup>

"Sapphira . . . gave up the *ghost*." <sup>6</sup>

As ideas expand, new words are found to distinguish between the finer conceptions of our imagination. The

<sup>1</sup> The reader will probably be reminded how the places that were regarded as sacred or held in awe were always such where the wind could be heard—hill-tops, groves, clefts, etc. "Thou hearest the sound of the *pneuma* (spirit), but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth" From being always windy, such places were looked upon as the haunts of the "*pneuma*," or spirits

<sup>2</sup> Acts xvii. 25

<sup>3</sup> John iii. 8. Literally, "The breath (or spirit) breatheth."

<sup>4</sup> Rev. xiii. 15 That is, could put "breath" or "spirit" (*pneuma*) into the lifeless idol

<sup>5</sup> Acts vii. 50

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. v. 10.

"breath" (or "pneuma") of primitive man has been resolved—in the English language—into the separate and distinct conceptions of "wind," "life," "spirit," "ghost," "soul," "mind," "reason," "intellect," "conscience," and many other cognate ideas. But this expansion of ideas and increase of vocabulary has not taken place to an equal degree in every language. In German there is the word "Geist," which has to do duty for ghost as well as for spirit. In gospel Greek they had separate words for "soul" and "wind," but not for most of the ideas above enumerated. Of this I will speak again presently. For the present I desire to point out that the more ideas evolve and are resolved into several more or less distinct conceptions, the narrower becomes the meaning of the original word. In English, for instance, the meaning of the word "spirit" has been thus narrowed within comparatively recent times.

In Bacon's time, and long after, that which we now call the "properties" of bodies—i.e. their qualities—were called their "spirits." Not only were they so called, but the qualities of bodies were conceived as being *due to the spirits that dwelt in them*. According to Bacon, the "prime matter" of all bodies was the same, and the difference they exhibited were entirely due to their "spirits." The "spirits" of a brick were "coarse, slow, and sluggish"; those of a diamond, "quick, subtle, penetrating, and jejune"; and if we only knew how to transfer the spirits of the latter into the former, the brick would be converted into a diamond.

Similar to this, apparently, must have been the conception of the people about the time of Paul concerning man. That is, not the life only but the character of a person depended on the nature of "the indwelling spirit." And just as Bacon believed that a "transmutation of spirits" in inanimate bodies was feasible,<sup>1</sup> whereby one substance might be changed into another; so the ancient

<sup>1</sup> Bacon went so far as to suggest experiments on these lines for making "congealed water that would not melt again by heat" (i.e. stalagmite, which he believed to be "congealed water") and for the transmutations of metals.

inhabitants of Judæa believed in the possibility of changing the "spirits" in man. Indeed, according to their conception of "life," they must have had daily proof of this; for anyone who could effect a cure, calm down an infuriated person, or change the opinions of a man had "cast out a spirit" a "spirit of infirmity," a "violent spirit," or an "evil spirit," as the case might be. They could not express it otherwise. When a person, for instance, recovered from an illness, this fact could not be otherwise conceived or described except by saying that "the spirit that had troubled him had left him"; just as we still say that "the fever has *left* the patient" or of someone that "he had *caught* a cold"

Such spirits were regarded as entities. They could come and go, and you could *hear* their sound, but could not see or touch them. Hence their belief in the resurrection of the body, and not merely of an incorporeal spirit.

For the spirit could depart and return, but it could neither die nor change. A spirit of infirmity was always a spirit of infirmity. The cure of the person could only be effected by casting out the undesirable spirit.

Bearing in mind these fundamental conceptions, we shall be able to understand why Paul believed in the resurrection of the body: he could not conceive of it in any other way. The *departed* spirit had to *return*. The body, forsooth, might be a different one; but some sort of a body was a mental necessity. This will also explain the meaning of these words put into the mouth of the resurrected Christ, when he is said to have appeared to his disciples —

"Handle me, and see: for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have."<sup>1</sup>

All this, however, only by the way. What is of interest is the fact that the belief in "spirits inhabiting bodies" —both animate and inanimate—was common to all mankind and has come down almost to our own days. Such expressions as "spirits of salts," "spirits of wine," "spirits of hartshorn" still remind us of how our ancestors conceived certain phenomena.

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxiv. 38-9

It was a world of "spirits." And if only we can remember that it was regarded as such by England's great philosopher of the seventeenth century, we shall be less surprised to find that it was so regarded by the fishermen and tentmakers of the first, or the evangelists and their copyists in the immediately succeeding centuries.

The Bible does not contain in the original Hebrew or Greek words corresponding to "mind," "intellect," "common sense," "cleverness," "reason," "intelligence," "intuition," "imagination," "ratiocination," "sane," "sanity," "moral," "conscience," or, in short, any word signifying intellectuality or mental states.

Nor was there any need for such, since the abstract ideas for which these words stand did not exist. All such phenomena were attributed to the hypothetical "spirits," and hence we find instead of the above vocabulary an assortment of such spirits, viz. poor spirits, foul spirits, evil spirits, holy spirits, dumb spirits, meek spirits, good spirits, spirit of Christ and of Antichrist, of prophecy, of wisdom, of slumber, of sorrow or of joy, and all the rest of them.

A man of sound mind, sound judgment, and—most important of all—sound doctrine, was possessed of the "holy *spirit*," which—in translation only!—becomes "holy *ghost*." The man of unsound mind had a "foul" spirit or a "devil," the simpleminded had a "poor" spirit; or, if a person was clever but not of sound doctrine, he had forsooth the "spirit of wisdom," but not the "holy spirit." This could be conferred by God only or his appointed saints.

The "holy spirit"—for there is absolutely no warranty in the originals to discriminate between holy *spirit* and holy *ghost*—was, therefore, nothing more than *right* or *sound* spirit; i.e. what to-day we call sound judgment or reason. This is more apparent in German, where the word "Geist"—the metaphrase of the English "spirit" or the Greek "pneuma"—still signifies intellectuality.

But really, there is no necessity to go outside the New Testament to prove that holy spirit or holy ghost meant nothing more than "reason"; i.e. the understanding

or mental capacity of a person ; and I could scarcely do better than quote the testimony of Paul .—

“ But the manifestation of the spirit is given to every man to profit withal For to one is given by the spirit the word of wisdom , to another the word of knowledge by the same spirit ; to another faith by the same spirit ; to another the gifts of healing by the same spirit ; to another the working of miracles ; to another prophecy ; to another discerning the spirits ; to another divers kinds of tongues ; to another the interpretation of tongues . but all these worketh that one and the selfsame spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.” <sup>1</sup>

As already stated, the word “ghost” is sometimes substituted for the word “spirit” in the English translation. This is not always permissible, however, as the two words are not always synonymous In the following sentences, for instance “Stephen, calling . . . Lord Jesus, receive my *spirit*,” and “Jesus . . . yielded up the *ghost*,” the meaning is the same But in the sentence: “If I cast out devils by the *spirit* of God. . . ” we could not substitute “ghost” for “spirit” without causing confusion ; and that because we associate with the word “ghost” something more than that only which animates or actuates

There is absolutely no necessity for using the word “ghost” at all in rendering the gospels into English except for doctrinal reasons. The word “spirit” exactly and accurately renders the meaning ; and wherever it has been found necessary—for doctrinal purposes—to use the word “ghost,” the original meaning has been altered, and in some cases the text even had to be corrupted to make such substitution possible.

I shall submit but one text in support of this double contention, but that should be conclusive For I shall try to unlock by means of the foregoing explanations the greatest mystery of Christian theology ; to wit, the sin against the Holy Ghost. I shall show that there is neither mystery nor absurdity about this passage in the text, except insofar as it has been imported by the translators.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 7-11.

There is, or is supposed to be—as everybody is aware—a sin greater than any other, greater even than blasphemy against God, to commit which is fatal; yet nobody knows what the sin consists in, except that it is the sin against the Holy Ghost.

In the first place I desire to point out the *prima facie* absurdity of even supposing such a possibility as that the Creator should take so much trouble about the "salvation" of mankind as to send "his only begotten Son" in such a melodramatic fashion into the world, to undergo there an atrocious death, all for the sole purpose of saving mankind, then to warn them against the deadliest of all sins, and never to tell even what that sin consists in!

I venture to say that if you searched all the superstitions of the world, you could not find a more monstrous absurdity or a greater impiety than this. I am glad, therefore, to be able to show that there is not a scintilla in the gospels to support such a doctrine.

Jesus has, indeed, warned his hearers against "*reviling the spirit*," and also said that such a sin is unpardonable—as, of course, it is—but neither he nor those whom he addressed were for a moment in doubt as to what he meant. Nor need we be to-day, but for the fact that eighteen centuries of theological obscurantism have enveloped a perfectly clear passage with the fog of mysticism. In fact, by a strange irony of fate, the theologians, in their mental blindness, have committed the very sin Jesus warned them against; i.e. to "revile or abuse your reason."

The warning is contained in all the three synoptics but only Matthew gives a full account of the circumstances Jesus had "cast out devils"; which means that he had made many converts and had an ever-growing following. The "Pharisees" were displeased, but could not arrest his onward march by meeting him in argument. Jesus was irresistible in debate. And so his opponents resorted to the only means available to unreasoning reactionaries—they maligned him. "This fellow," they said, "doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils."

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xii. 24.

The self-contradiction of the accusation is absurdly apparent. It is what is known in logic as a paralogism, and in vernacular English as an "Irish bull." But his antagonists were not aware of their own stupidity, and so Jesus tried to bring it home to them by an *argumentum ad absurdum* in a manner peculiarly his own. Here is the narrative as given by Matthew<sup>1</sup> —

"And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand. And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house. He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad. Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy *against* the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come. Either make the tree good, and his fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit."

Observe that the whole is one continuous argument, commencing with showing up the absurdity of saying that Beelzebub is at war with himself, and finishing with the advice of either declaring Beelzebub a good spirit that is doing good or an evil spirit that is doing evil; but you cannot say he is evil and yet is doing good, as he would be doing if he were "casting out devils."

Note also that if we gave to verses 31 and 32 the interpretation put on them by the Churches, then they would be interpolations in the middle of an argument

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xii. 25-33.

with which they could then have no connection, and without either rhyme or reason. That supposition, however, is ruled out by the word "Wherefore" (Greek "dia") with which verse 31 begins. This not only shows connection with what has gone before, but that it follows directly from it.

This will become apparent when we eliminate two words in verse 31 that have been interpolated by the translators—"against" and "Holy"—and which have no business there at all, and by substituting *spirit* for *ghost*, for reasons explained already.

Then there is the word "blasphemy," which in English is limited to speaking profanely of God, whereas in Greek it meant to *abuse* or to *revile* anything or anybody. Like "pneuma," the word "blasphemeo" has been resolved in English into several ideas, with different shades of meaning, and the word (in its various forms) has been rendered in the English version by the following words or phrases: "to speak evil of," "to revile," "to rail on," "to report slanderously," "to defame," "to blaspheme," etc.

But since in English the phrase "to blaspheme" has been narrowed down to mean profaning the deity, the expression should here be rendered by a word not so limited.

A correct translation of the passage would require, therefore, the omission of the words "against" and "Holy" in verse 31; the substitution of "spirit" for "ghost" in verses 31 and 32; and the substitution of a verb with a *general* meaning—such as "abusing" or "reviling"—for the *exclusive noun* "blasphemy." The verses would then read thus.—

31. "Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and abuse shall be forgiven unto men: but the abuse of the spirit shall not be forgiven unto men."

32. "And whosoever speaketh against the son of man,<sup>1</sup> it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the holy spirit (i.e. reason), it shall not be forgiven him, neither now nor ever."

Which, being interpreted, means: "Revile *me* if you

<sup>1</sup> I.e. against a person, "son of man" simply meaning *man* generically.



like and as much as you like ; but how about your own reason ? Verily I say unto you, Once you take leave of your reason there is no longer any help for you."

This, then, is the " Holy Ghost " by which people were spiritually born, who has begotten the Lord Jesus Christ, and to sin against which is so serious a matter—as no doubt it is. The " son of man " could commit no greater blunder (i.e. " sin ") than by reviling his own reason , a sin theologians are constantly committing.

## CHAPTER XI

### GENERAL SURVEY

WE have laid bare what has been left of the edifice which the Sage of Nazareth had planned to erect, but which was destroyed and laid waste before it was finished.

Very little has been preserved for us of the superstructure. Here and there a buttress, a portion of wall, a column or two, or a few scattered pieces of masonry is all that is left of it—just enough to enable us to make out the main features of the design, and no more. But the foundations are still intact and promise rich rewards to the patient explorer. These we may now examine at our leisure, unhampered by theological casuistry or bias.

But before entering on this more profitable part of our task, it will be well to make a general survey of the outstanding facts which we have uncovered and by their help try to find answers to certain questions which at the outset of our inquiry we found so embarrassing.

First of these is the familiar poser: If Christ is a myth, how do you account for Christianity? For the Christian cult—it is contended—is distinct not only from every other system of faith, but differs radically and characteristically from the Jewish cult, although it originated among the Jews.

The question is based on entirely erroneous assumptions. There seems to be a belief among the uninformed that Christianity was a new cult at the time of its inception, something which was unknown in Judæa before the introduction of Christianity. Nothing could be further from the truth. That which is thought to be characteristic of Christianity—apart from doctrine, which is constantly changing—had been known and practised by certain

Jewish sects—the Essenes—long before the time of either Jesus or Paul. The latter has merely grafted a new doctrine on to an already established cult.

From the account which Josephus gives of the various systems of philosophy which then flourished among the Jews, it is not difficult to identify the Nazarenes, the sect which Paul at first persecuted and eventually became a convert to, as a branch of the Essenes; for there were several divisions of them. They were Jews in race and religion, and the peculiar customs, rites, and institutions which differentiated them from other Jewish sects (of which there were many) are the characteristic features of the Christian cult.

Josephus speaks of them as a people of high virtues, unselfish, patriotic, and heroic. But they were also pious and doctrinaire, which made them exclusive, and separated them from the rest of the Jews. Many of the exhortations of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount were directed against their excesses in piety. They denounced the pleasures of life, and many of them went to extremes in their asceticism—neither changing their garments until they were worn to tatters nor anointing themselves.<sup>1</sup> Monastic life, celibacy, austerity, anchorism—in short, all that which is characteristic of early Christianity—was practised among these Essenes long before Paul gave them a “Christ.” They also had their saints and martyrs—John the Baptist and Jesus are to be counted among them—before they were “Christians” by name.

But I will let Josephus speak: “These Essenes reject pleasures as an evil, but esteem continence, and the conquest over our passions, to be virtue. . . . These men are despisers of riches . . . nor is there any one to be found among them who hath more than another; for it is a law among them that those who come to them must let what they have be common to the whole order.<sup>2</sup> . . . They have no certain city, but many of them dwell in every city; and if any of their sect come from other places, what they have lies open for them, just as if it

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Matt. vi. 16-18.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Acts ii. 44-5; iv. 32.

were their own. . . For which reason they carry nothing with them when they travel into remote parts." <sup>1</sup>

It is in the synagogues of these Essenes that Paul "argued so mightily," showing from the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

He did not bring to them a new religion at all. They would have stoned him had he attempted to do so. He certainly would not have been allowed to enter their synagogue, or to desecrate it by preaching heretical doctrines. For, to quote again from Josephus: "What they most of all honour, after God himself, is the name of their legislator (Moses), whom if anyone blaspheme, he is punished capitally." <sup>2</sup> But they welcomed new doctrines, prophecies, or interpretations if based on Scripture, and delighted in disputing over the meaning of Biblical texts. Moreover, they would accept as final whatever could be proved from the Scriptures.

This explains the force of Paul's argument that if there is a prophecy in the Scriptures "it needs must have been fulfilled." On that point there would be the most perfect agreement. They expected the Messiah, as orthodox Jews do to this day, and reasoned about him. Paul was quite free, therefore, to argue the proposition that Jesus *was* the Messiah. Jesus was one of their martyrs and already held in high esteem. All that Paul had to do was to produce his Scripture proof.

His task, therefore, was no greater than was, say, that of Athanasius <sup>3</sup> in proposing his doctrine of the Trinity, or of Calvin in promulgating his doctrine of predestination.

But to return to the account which Josephus gives of these people: "And as for their piety towards God, it is very extraordinary; for before sun rising they speak not a word about profane matters, but put up certain prayers which they have received from their forefathers." (Cf. the injunction of Jesus, "Do not use vain repetitions.") "A priest says grace before meat; and it is unlawful for anyone to taste of food before grace be said. The

<sup>1</sup> *Wars of the Jews*, Book II, chap. viii. 1-4. Compare with this, "Take neither scrip nor staff." <sup>2</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup> Or whoever might have been the originator of the doctrine.

same priest, when he has dined, says grace again after meat; and when they begin, and when they end, they praise God. . . . They dispense their anger after a just manner, and restrain their passion. They are eminent for fidelity, and are the ministers of peace; whatsoever they say also is firmer than an oath; but swearing is avoided by them, and they esteem it worse than perjury. . . .

"They condemn the miseries of life, and are above pain, by the generosity of their mind. And as for death, if it will be for their glory, they esteem it better than living always; and indeed our war with the Romans gave abundant evidences what great souls they had in their trials, wherein although they were tortured and distorted, burnt and torn to pieces, and went through all kinds of instruments of torment, that they might be forced either to blaspheme their legislator or to eat what was forbidden them, yet could they not be made to do either of them, no, nor once to flatter their tormentors, nor to shed a tear; but they smiled on their very pains, and laughed those to scorn who inflicted the torments upon them, and resigned up their souls with great alacrity, as expecting to receive them again." \*

It is often urged by Christian apologists in defence of their faith that people died for it; forgetting the martyrs of other faiths, and especially those who in later years became the victims of Christian persecution rather than become Christians. But here we are told by a trusty historian of martyrs before a Christ was preached; and many of the descendants of these Essenes are suffering martyrdom to-day (e.g. in Russia) rather than forsake the faith of their fathers. But martyrdom proves nothing beyond the sincerity of the victim in his own convictions.

Christianity is a stupendous fact, no doubt, if judged by the number of its adherents, and the hold it has even on people who in their hearts no longer believe in its tenets. But it is not more stupendous in this respect than either Buddhism, which is a much older cult, or Mohammedanism, which is of more recent date than

\* *Wars of the Jews*, loc. cit.

Christianity. These kind of arguments are specious at best, and prove rather more than is intended by those who advance them. Nor is any such explanation necessary in the case of Christianity, for we are in a position to account for the origin of the cult, with all its miracles, dogmas, customs, rites, and ceremonials. We can trace its history as we can trace that of no other ancient system of worship

Indeed, the student of folklore who desires to know how legends originate, grow, and ramify until it passes the understanding how they could have gained currency or credence, cannot do better than study the evolution of Christianity. The origin of most legends is lost in the remote and forgotten past. That is not the case, however, with the Christ-myth, which may still be traced back to its very inception, and thence we may follow its evolution, including doctrines and miracles, down to the present day.

Another question—raised in a previous chapter, but still requiring to be answered—is, If Jesus was not the founder of Christianity, how came he to be regarded as such? How came it about that he whose every thought and word was so plainly opposed to their doctrines should be looked upon by believers in the strange doctrines of Paul as their prophet rather than as the veritable Anti-christ?

The answer to this question is to be found in the origin of the Christ-myth and the evolution of Christianity. Paul not only declared Jesus to be Christ, but attributed all his own strange doctrines to him. This argues that the name of Jesus must have been famous before Paul raised him to the Messiahship, but not necessarily that Paul knew anything about him or his teachings, beyond what legend ascribed to him; namely, that he rose from the dead and continued to confer with certain of the "elect" and to work miracles. Indeed, we have seen that Paul knew absolutely nothing about the *real* Jesus or his teachings. All the witnesses he mentions saw, or were supposed to have seen, the *resurrected* Jesus, Paul himself included. It was the legendary, and not the real Jesus, whom Paul knew; and him he knew as

such only as his own feverish fancy painted him. It was Paul himself who conferred Christship on this creation of his own imagination.

Two elements are necessary for the growth of a legend—a great personality or some great event, and a credulous and superstitious people. These given, a legend will soon appear and grow and spread far beyond the ramifications of the mustard seed with which Jesus tried to illustrate the fertilizing power of a truth.

Jesus was more than a great man in his days and country: he was a phenomenon. The possession of a great truth always confers on a person a power in debate even against a more skilful dialectician, which he could not otherwise command. It also has as extraordinary psychological effect in unifying ideas and strengthening the mental faculties. But when to that is added the rare combination of gifts we can discern even now to have been possessed by Jesus—clear thinking; keen logical perception; facility of expression; skill in debate, reaching the heart of the matter under discussion in a few well-chosen words; and a rare command of telling metaphor that enabled him to appeal to the multitude on most abstruse questions<sup>1</sup>—a power results that is bound to leave its mark in any country and at any period.

Jesus, with the message he had for mankind, the rare gifts of presenting it, and his lofty character, would be a commanding personality in Europe at the present day. How much more must that have been the case in ancient Judæa, among ignorant and credulous people, saturated with a belief in the supernatural and presided over by a caste or castes of scholastics steeped in dialectical disputations and traditional sacerdotalism?

We may well believe the evangelist who says that “His fame went throughout all Syria . . . and there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judæa,

<sup>1</sup> Alas! often with disastrous results, for his metaphors were frequently taken in a literal sense and have led to most absurd beliefs and doctrines among the ignorant, especially in later years, when the evangelists

and from beyond Jordan." <sup>1</sup> He must indeed have been "a bright star in the East," attracting the "wise men to come to Jerusalem to reverence him"; <sup>2</sup> and it is not at all improbable that this is the true meaning and origin of the legend about the star of Bethlehem. The "star," no doubt, was Jesus himself, and "the wise men" did not come at his *birth*, but when he was at the height of his fame, not to "worship," but to admire and to reverence.<sup>3</sup>

The fame of such a man would be great and his influence widespread, even in our own days. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the people among whom he worked and taught should have repeated to each other reports of his sayings and doings, or that exaggerations and misrepresentations should have crept into these reports and gained free currency and acceptance. We need not go back in mind to the Galilee of nineteen centuries ago for explanations; we can find parallels in plenty nearer our own times and country. Who that will read these pages has not heard of Lourdes and the many other shrines in enlightened Europe where miracles and miraculous cures are of everyday occurrence? Or of Father Ilidor; of Madame Blavatsky; of Mahatmas; of haunted houses; of "mascots," spiritualistic materializations, clairvoyants, fortune-tellers, and the like of them? <sup>4</sup>

The very common sense of his utterances, which so confounded his opponents, must have seemed magic to the multitude, and made Jesus appear a superior being in their eyes—as undoubtedly he was.

<sup>1</sup> Matt iv 24-5

<sup>2</sup> Ibid ii. 2

<sup>3</sup> The R. V. says "to worship him." The Greek word is "proskyneo" which means "to kiss," "to reverence," or "to do homage."

<sup>4</sup> To these I might add "the Angels of Mons," about whom so much has been printed lately in quite serious publications, and the phantom army of Russians which was supposed to have passed via Archangel and Scotland into France. Another illustration of how legends originate in the fertile soil of ignorance is afforded by a paragraph which made the round of the Press, after the occupation of Zeebrugge by the Germans, to the effect that German prisoners of war firmly believed that the Channel had already been bridged by the Germans from Calais to Dover, the idea having been suggested by the name "Zeebrugge," which means "sea bridge."



That Jesus had fed some hungry poor; that he had relieved suffering wherever he could; that he comforted, counselled, and soothed people who were troubled, we may assume for certain from his revealed character. That these simple deeds should be circulated by his admirers and in the passing on be embellished until they attained to miraculous proportions even in the lifetime of Jesus, is but natural if human nature was then what it is to-day. And that in later generations miracles should arise through the growth of language, out of errors by copyists or translators, or the ignorance of commentators, is still less of a surprise.

People at all times have been eager in telling and retelling the virtues, deeds, and prowess of their favourite hero. This is especially the case after he has passed away. The death of every famous person brings forth its crop of anecdotal matter which is eagerly devoured, enlarged upon, and passed on.

Both the life and death of Jesus were out of the ordinary, as was his whole personality. His exhortations appealed so strongly to the common sense of mankind that it was impossible to gainsay or to contradict him. If we add to all this his sympathy for and championship of the poor and the oppressed, it will not be found necessary to invoke any other "miracle"<sup>1</sup> to account for the fact that the memory of Jesus should have survived; that it should have been held in reverence; that legends should have been woven round his name, or that the ignorant and credulous should have fathered their superstitions upon him. Nor is it to be wondered at that some should have believed that Jesus had risen from the dead. The disappearance of his body—as previously pointed out—may easily have given rise to this belief among those who at that particular period were zealous in spreading the (in Judæa) then new doctrine of the resurrection of the body.

<sup>1</sup> To myself the greatest miracle in connection with Jesus is that the Judæa of those days should have produced such a man, and that he should have remained misunderstood to this day, notwithstanding all the labours

Then Paul appears on the scene, accepts the theory of the resurrection, to which at first he was opposed, declares Jesus to have been the expected Messiah, and, led by the *ignis fatuus* of his inexorable logic, loses himself in a bog of metaphysics, as has been the fate of so many people who, like Paul, were gifted with an active, subtle brain and nothing to feed on except their own thoughts.

It was Paul who first designated Jesus as "the Lord Jesus Christ" and thus linked the name of the historical Jesus with his own theories concerning a mythical Christ. For, as insisted on in these pages, the Christ of Paul had nothing in common with the historical Jesus beyond the name.

When, therefore, *some generations later*, the evangelists compiled their narratives, they no longer discriminated between the real and the mythical Jesus, but collected whatever tradition reported of either, setting down item after item as it came to hand, without scrutiny or criticism. Thus it came about that Jesus was credited with having been the founder of a faith which is the antithesis of his teachings; and that two such mutually exclusive philosophies came to be mixed up and included in the same tract.

That the few genuine fragments of the teachings of Jesus are there by accident only, and are entirely foreign to the spirit of Pauline Christianity, is proved by the fact that they have been stumbling-blocks to the "Church of Christ" all these centuries. There is not a Christian dogma based on these indisputably genuine relics (such as the Sermon or the parables, or the dialogue between the young ruler and Jesus); nor is there a Christian doctrine or dogma which is not diametrically opposed to the "ethics of Jesus," as his teachings have deprecatingly been designated, so as to subordinate them to what is called "spiritual Christianity."

Before taking leave of Paul and his Christology, a few words on the chronology of the New Testament writings may not be out of place.

It is essential to bear in mind that instead of being contemporaries of Jesus—as is generally believed—the

writers of the Gospels lived and wrote generations *after Paul*, who himself was not a contemporary of Jesus, but belonged to a succeeding generation. By so doing many textual difficulties will find natural solutions in the reflection that the incidents and dialogues were written down by ignorant, credulous scribes, many years after they were supposed to have taken place, and from hearsay only.

That the Gospels are of more recent date than the Pauline epistles can be proved by their contents. The evidence is as follows.—

Any document in which reference is made to any doctrine must necessarily have been written after such doctrine had been promulgated.

The Christ-myth is obviously older than the Gospels in which we find it mentioned, and is spoken of as something that has been handed down by former generations. On the other hand, it cannot be older than the epistles, in which we see it being established step by step and bit by bit.

The only subject-matter that the Gospels and the epistles of Paul have in common is that Jesus was Christ, and that those who believe on him shall be saved. Paul's epistles contain nothing else of doctrinal matter except just what belongs to the Christship of Jesus and his scheme of "salvation by faith through the Lord Jesus Christ." In the Gospels, however, we find in addition a great deal of information concerning the birth, life, ministry, and death of Jesus about which no mention is made by Paul.

Now, there are only three possible theories to account for the presence in both the Gospels and the epistles of that particular scheme of salvation which Paul has elaborated with so much pain and industry, and defended so consistently in all his writings. These are:—

1. That Paul copied it from the Gospels.
2. That the evangelists copied it from the writings of Paul.
3. That both Paul and the evangelists are indebted

All the indications are that it is the evangelists who are indebted to Paul for the doctrine. This conclusion is supported by many considerations. Paul not only tells us that the gospel he preached was entirely his own, but there is *prima facie* evidence that he spoke the truth. The name of Jesus may have been, and no doubt was, inscribed in the calendar of their saints by the sect of the Nazarenes, some may even have regarded him as the Messiah; but it was Paul who developed the scheme of salvation, who discovered the "fall" of Adam, the "promise" to Abraham, the theory of ransom, and salvation by faith. He is consistent throughout, and we see him developing doctrine after doctrine, as necessity arose.

Had Paul taken his ideas from the Gospels—or, to put it in another way, had the Gospels been extant at the time of Paul, it is scarcely conceivable that Paul should never have quoted, if not some of the sayings of Jesus, at least some of the miracles concerning his birth that would have so strengthened his arguments. Paul relied entirely on Scripture prophecies, and the Scriptures required that Christ should be of the seed of David, and be born at Bethlehem, the city of David. What a glorious argument it would have been if Paul could have shown that he actually was born there, that Joseph and Mary had to go to Jerusalem, and pass through Bethlehem, so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. Equally surprising is it that Paul should have failed to take notice of the alleged miraculous birth by a virgin mother.

Yet not a word or even an allusion do we find in all his writings to anything related in the Gospels about Jesus, his birth, life, ministry, trial, or death, beyond just the statement that he had been crucified and that he rose again. All this is explained by supposing that the Gospels did not exist, and the marvels of which they tell had not been current when Paul wrote.

But this is not all. If we assume that the Gospels had been written before Paul preached his own scheme of salvation, then not only was his gospel not original, but he must have been preaching doctrines that were generations old; for the evangelists wrote of things that

had been "delivered unto them" by former generations. Luke, at least, does not leave us in doubt as to this.

Paul is insistent that his gospel was his own. Luke is equally explicit that what he was recording were ancient doctrines; and there seems to be no reason whatever to doubt either statement. Moreover, we read in Luke's Gospel (xvi. 16): "The law and the prophets were until John since that time the kingdom of God is preached"; which is a distinctly Pauline doctrine and thus shows that Luke wrote subsequently to Paul. And if it be true that the same scribe who wrote this Gospel was also the author of the "Acts," then no further argument is needed; for this document tells us of the doings of Paul.

I have given prominence to Luke's Gospel because of the explicit statement of its author that he was recording traditions. But there is ample evidence to be found in the other Gospels that the same applies to all of them. They all have the character of being records of events that have happened long ago.

And so we are driven to the conclusion that when the evangelists compiled their Gospels they "set down in order that which was assuredly believed among them, even as they received it"; and among these things were fragments of an old gospel, which we may now call "the gospel of Jesus," and doctrines from a later gospel, which we may safely describe as "the gospel of Paul." These two gospels, or what had been left of them at the time, together with oral traditions, supplied the contents of the four canonical Gospels.

Scholars have laboured hard in assigning correct dates to the various documents of the New Testament. If they will try again on the lines here indicated—with a view of finding out how *recent* the Gospels are instead of trying to make out that they are of an early date—they will probably be more successful,

## CHAPTER XII

### VALUE OF LEGENDS AS SOURCES OF HISTORY

THE history of Jesus was not such as a nation would strive to perpetuate in its chronicles—at least not officially. He was executed as a common felon, and official Judaism was scandalized by his propaganda. As a consequence the rulers did all they could to suppress every trace of him and his doctrines.

The Romans were not sufficiently interested in the internal affairs of the Jews, and would scarcely take any notice of Jesus or his disputations with the rabbonim. And so after his death the only people who remained interested in his teachings and doings were a few intelligent followers of his—such as Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, etc. These no doubt would preserve any writings relating to Jesus or his teachings; possibly write down many of his sayings themselves; but this they could do secretly only. After their death these writings would pass into the possession of people to whom they would no longer have the same value or meaning, be neglected, scattered, and partially destroyed; so that when—after Jesus had become the central figure of a cult—the chroniclers appeared on the scene, only fragments would be extant and eventually become incorporated—by accident rather than design—in the chronicles of Christ.

That explains why, with the exception of these few relics of a more ancient gospel, only legendary matter has reached us concerning so great and epoch-making a teacher. Only what tradition has handed down was preserved, and popular tradition delights in the marvellous only. Anything that is not in itself a prodigy or that

does not lend itself to be exaggerated into something wonderful is ignored.

This tendency to exaggeration has been intensified in the case of Jesus by his quasi-biographers, who had accepted the theory of his supernatural origin and credited him with supernatural powers. In such circumstances they could find no use for any commonplace, humdrum incident in the life of their hero, unless it could be exaggerated into something that would excite marvel. The scribe would never have recorded so commonplace a matter, for instance, as the attendance of Jesus at the lectures and disputations in the synagogue were it not that he was able to say that he did so when a mere child, and already was able to astonish grey-headed doctors with his wisdom. The more monstrous or the less credible an account was, the greater the miracle and, of course, the more acceptable.

Yet these are the only records we possess concerning the life and teachings of Jesus. Can we write history from such sources? It is not as impossible as it seems.

We cannot accept, of course, legend as history. But neither can we reject it as we should pure deliberate invention, as of no historical value at all. Legend differs from deliberate fiction in this, that though grossly inaccurate, and often far removed from the truth, it is nevertheless a record of—or has been inspired by—something that has actually happened. Sometimes the legend is a blurred picture, and sometimes an exaggerated account of an event; or, maybe, the whole account is untrue in all its incidents—an account of something that not only did not happen, but which is quite incredible—absurd, in fact—and yet may be founded on, or be the outcome of, some actual event, or be illustrative of some truth.

As far as concerns character in particular, tradition seldom errs; and despite its exaggerations, and the unreliability of the incidents which it employs to convey its appreciations or condemnations of the chief actors in some national or world drama, is in many respects more reliable than are some historical records

By way of illustration let us take the legend of the wedding-feast at Cana, where Jesus is said to have turned water into wine. We may dismiss the miracle as pure invention. We may even doubt whether Jesus was actually present at that particular wedding-feast. And yet, the very fact that tradition credits him with having attended such festivities shows the character that would inspire the tale. We could not think of such a tale in connection with John the Baptist, for instance, who wore a loin-cloth of camel's hair fastened with a leather girdle; lived on locusts and wild honey, took up a position at a frequented ford of the river, to molest travellers; upbraided and censured everybody, and in the end lost his head for doing so. John was an ascetic—morose, censorious, pessimist, and misanthropic. As such tradition paints him; and however exaggerated are the colours used, the resultant character is true and consistent.

Contrast now the character of Jesus. We are told that he attended at merry-makings; that he was “a glutton and a wine-bibber” (this by his enemies) and “ate with publicans and sinners”; rebuked those who made a display of their piety and bade people who were fasting to wash their faces, anoint their heads, and be of cheerful countenance. He loved children; counselled, cheered, and helped wherever he had an opportunity; knew the weaknesses of mankind; was full of compassion, and had a kindly word even for the woman who sinned.

So that even if every one of these incidents was invented, the character which they depict could still be relied upon, and that far more surely than if we possessed the deliberate outlines of it by three historians, one of them, let us say, a hostile Pharisee, one a Roman, and the third one of his own disciples.

The truth is that tradition paints characters and tendencies of great events more faithfully than does the reputed historian, and that despite the glaring colourings and exaggerations it delights in.

Modern history is accurate only in its records of actual events: of time, place, numbers, and such-like data. But when it is a question of interpreting great national



events or delineating the character of a national hero, then tradition often is the more trustworthy, and that for the following reasons. As far as motives and results or cause and effect are concerned, the historian records his own opinions. Were the opinions of other persons canvassed, possibly no two might agree. The opinion of a crowd, therefore, is not necessarily any nearer the truth than any such individual opinion; but tradition is more than the transmitted opinion of a crowd. It is the survival of the aggregate spirit of the times—the *vox populi*—which gives us a moving picture of the times, so that we can analyse dispassionately and apportion cause and effect.

I will not pursue the argument any further. The point I desire to bring into focus is that the most profitable part of history is not its chronology of events, or even the accuracy of the physical data. At least, it is not so in the present case, where our interests are in a philosophy rather than the incidents associated with its enunciation.

I do not put this forth in the spirit of the fox who expressed his contempt for the grapes that were beyond his reach. Indeed, any historical detail that could be ascertained in connection with the personality of Jesus or his times would be of surpassing interest. I merely want to refute the allegation that because the records we possess are legendary, therefore they possess no historical value at all; or that because the name of Jesus is so intimately interwoven with the mythical Christ, therefore Jesus himself is a mythical personage. For my part, I utterly reject the counsel of those who say "False in part, false in all," as I do the insistence of those other extremists who say we must accept the whole account unquestioningly. On either basis very little of early history would be left to us, were such canons universally adopted.

In the case before us we shall not be able to give dates of events and incidents in the life-history of Jesus. Many of the recorded events—such as the slaughter of the innocents, the resurrection, ascension, etc.—we shall have to reject as invention. We shall doubt the accuracy in matters of detail of such narratives even which deal

with events that undoubtedly must have happened ; as, for instance, the arrest, trial, sentence, and crucifixion. Concerning but few events can we fix any dates, and even then approximately only.

And yet, as regards the spirit of the times, the prevailing conditions, the general trend of events, the character of the chief actors in this stirring world-drama, or its chief incidents, there are few phases in the history of early times of which we possess more life-like pictures. Thus we possess the characters of Jesus, of John the Baptist, of Annas and Caiaphas, of Pontius Pilate, etc., presented to us not as individual delineations, but in action, as moving pictures which enable us to follow the chief events of the times and to discern the motive springs that helped to produce them.

However legendary and incredible tradition may be when taken literally, if carefully traced it has great historical value, inasmuch as it is a record of something that has happened *somewhere, sometime, and somehow*, and that if we take the trouble to inquire into the origin of these legends and apply some common sense, we can write history from it.

The rule to apply is that which we employ in our everyday affairs when we are trying to account for phenomena or events which we have not witnessed ourselves. In such cases we are seeking not merely for *possible* explanations, but for natural causes and agencies which—taking all the attendant circumstances into account—are the most *probable* to explain the phenomenon. It is on reasoning of this kind—that is, of tracing phenomena to their most probable causes—that our knowledge of geology is based ; that Darwin's theory of the origin of species is built ; and that medical men diagnose disease. It is by a similar process also that the criminologist combines a number of seemingly unconnected incidents and circumstances into a sequence of events, which then enables him to "re-enact"—to use a technical phrase—the crime which he cannot solve by direct evidence.

In a similar manner, and by a like process, may we trace the life-history of Jesus. "The tree is known by

its fruit." From the effect we may reason to the cause, and may infer the agencies that must have contributed towards it. Then, by reversing the process, we may, mentally, re-enact the events of the past in their proper sequence and thus account for phenomena and incidents which at first seemed to defy explanation. In this reconstruction of past history many minor facts, which at first only served to add embarrassment to the mystery, fall into their places and thereby strengthen our conviction that we have reasoned correctly.

We may accept, for instance, the statement that Jesus was of lowly birth, the son of Joseph the carpenter and Mary his wife, and that Nazareth was his birthplace, and reject his alleged descent from David without any inconsistency, and that for the following reasons.

Mankind is fond of the sensational, of things that are out of the common ; and if a man who has become famous happens to be of humble parentage, that circumstance adds poignancy to the tales which his admirers delight to tell about him. Nobody is likely to take notice of the village carpenter or his son. But if the latter becomes famous, the fact that he was the son of the lowly carpenter would be emphasized and talked about. It is this circumstance in fact, more than his learning and cleverness, which, in the popular estimation, made him into a prodigy. So long as a man remains obscure, nobody troubles about his origin. Once he emerges from the crowd, his past history is canvassed and anything out of the common is eagerly seized upon.

We have no reason to suppose that the people of Judæa differed in this respect from the rest of mankind the world over. Quite the contrary : we have actual evidence—though scarcely needed—that they did not. There are records that the origin and parentage of Jesus were discussed by his contemporaries, as was to be expected. "Whence hath this man this wisdom and these mighty works?" asked the people of Nazareth. "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters are they not all with us? Whence then

hath this man all these things ? ”<sup>1</sup> “ How knoweth this man letters, having never learned ? ”<sup>2</sup> “ Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth ? ”<sup>3</sup>

Again I will point out that we need not trouble as to whether these words were actually spoken as recorded and on the occasions indicated. My argument is that generations after the death of Jesus people were still dwelling on the fact that the famous teacher was of lowly origin, and that everybody marvelled at the fact that the son of the carpenter of Nazareth possessed such wisdom. We may accept this circumstance as fact all the more, because it did *not* fit in with the romance subsequently woven round his name. The legend which assigned to him the Messiahship required him to be of royal blood ; so that his obscure origin must have been a great stumbling-block even to Paul, with all his resourcefulness and dialectical skill. It was to surmount this difficulty that the genealogy of the carpenter was traced to David, so as “ to fulfil what was required by the Scriptures.” For like reasons Bethlehem has been substituted for Nazareth as his birthplace, so as to fulfil the prophecy: “ Thou, Bethlehem . . . out of thee shall come a governor, that shall rule my people Israel ” (Matt. ii. 6). Such things in matters of genealogy are being done to-day whenever such a necessity arises ; and there is no reason to suppose that the experts in such matters in the days of Paul were less able to find just what was required of them, or that they were any more reliable than their modern representatives

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xiii. 54-6.

<sup>2</sup> John vii. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. i. 46.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH OF JESUS

SUCH are the reasons why we may accept with a certain degree of assurance one part of a legend and yet reject the other. Wherever it was possible, the obviously partial historian and biographer of Jesus represented him as sublime and supreme. As a child he was a prodigy; as a man he was a god. Everywhere he conquered. Nature itself was submissive to his will. Even where his supremacy was obviously in abeyance, the historian would not admit defeat. Thus, when a handful of soldiers came to arrest the "Son of God," and some of his followers attempted to resist, Jesus, after having deprecated the use of the sword, is made to say:—

"Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?"<sup>1</sup>

Then why did he not do so? This question is so obvious, that it did not escape the attention even of the not over-critical historian, and thus he answers it: "But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be?"<sup>2</sup>

This is the key to these mystic writings. Certain things were necessary "so that the Scriptures should be fulfilled." These are all matters relating to the legendary Christ which are not worth a moment's consideration. Other things were not so necessary, and often rather contrary to the requirements of the legend, which had to be explained away. These things we accept as history.

Following up this clue, we are able to construct the following brief biographical sketch.

Jesus was the son of Joseph, a carpenter of Nazareth,

and his wife Mary. (We accept Nazareth as the place of his nativity, because that is the tradition; and reject Bethlehem, because its claim to be the birthplace of Jesus is based on a prophecy.) The puerile miracles told about the infancy of Jesus<sup>1</sup> imply—what we may also infer from the man he grew into—that already as a child he exhibited a clear intellect and a brightness of spirit; whilst the legends about his exploits at play and at school show that his precociousness must have been a matter of surprise, and often a source of vexation, to those around him.

When at the height of his fame, all these exploits of his childhood, no doubt, were remembered, exaggerated, told and retold, until they grew into marvels and prodigies. We know that Jesus loved nature, and are not surprised to learn that as a child he did what millions of children have done before and since his time: made a dam after a rain, caught the streamlets of water, and out of the mud fashioned sundry objects. Nor need we be surprised that, when the carpenter's son became famous, his childish doings should be remembered and talked about. No doubt many would take credit to themselves for having discerned already in the child that he would astonish the world by his cleverness, and they would tell how when the children made mud-pies those of Jesus excelled all others; or when he fashioned birds, how life-like they were. People would vie with each other in remembering—or in inventing—the numerous childish tricks with which he astonished the good folks of Nazareth. That such tales were circulated and freely discussed is proved by the fact that many of them have survived to this day—much exaggerated, of course, so as to do credit to “the Son of God.” The sparrows which he made out of clay were not merely much more life-like than those fashioned by the other children, but when he clapped his hands they actually flew away. At school he exasperated his teachers by asking them questions which they could not answer. Somebody may have said something like “He worried

<sup>1</sup> More especially in the Apocrypha, which, from our point of view, with the canonical documents as sources of history.

the life out of them." This very probable and very natural tale was sufficient for the admiring historian to record how the gentle Jesus when a child actually *killed* teacher after teacher.<sup>1</sup> His father gratefully remembered what a great help his son was to him in former years; how on many occasions, when embarrassed over his work, or when he blundered, the son's cleverness got him out of difficulties. The enthusiastic biographer knows how to turn even such a homely memory into a miracle. He tells us how the father, by mistake, cut a plank too short, or made a chair too small, and how Jesus made the blunder right by requiring the father to take hold of one end whilst he himself took hold of the other, and then both pulled until the piece of timber had just the required length.

These childish miracles are but the counterpart of the crop of anecdotes we read in our own days about the childhood of famous people, and but show how ancient is the calling of the maker of "news." No doubt there must have been plenty of anecdotal matter about the childhood of Jesus well worth the telling and retelling, without any such exaggerations. Taking the circumstances and the age into account, these tales are inevitable. They simply show how tradition writes history. We must content ourselves concerning the history of his childhood with the following summary by Luke: "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him."<sup>2</sup>

Jesus seems to have followed the trade of his father—for some time, at least; for later on he belonged to the "therapeutæ" or "healers." But carpentering evidently did not supply sufficient food for his active brain. It was the custom in those days for the doctors of the law to assemble in the synagogue and there to expound certain texts of Scripture and to discuss points of difference. The people were allowed to attend these discussions, to ask questions, and to take part in them. Jesus was attracted to these debates at an early age, and took an absorbing interest in them. Tradition has preserved for us so much information about his youth.

"And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. And when they saw him, they were amazed." (Tradition says "in the Temple." We may substitute for it, as more probable, the synagogue of his native town.)

It was here, no doubt, where he acquired his knowledge of the Scriptures that in later years so surprised his townsfolk.

It was not a mere occasional visit ; he must have spent every spare moment among the disputing doctors, "both hearing them and asking them questions." This information had not been written down until after he had become famous, and it would not have been remembered or recorded unless his attendance at the synagogue had been a prominent feature in his early life. No doubt on many an occasion when Jesus was wanted he had to be fetched from these meetings, where he probably spent every moment he could spare.

This seems to be the answer to the questions of the people of Nazareth who, surprised at the learning of the carpenter, asked : "Whence has this man this wisdom ?" <sup>1</sup> "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned ?" <sup>2</sup>

For there were many that attended these lectures who were not students, and Jesus was one of these. But, unlike most of these passive listeners, who probably came more for diversion than instruction, Jesus took a keen interest in the discussions. The doctors seemed pleased with the intelligent youth, for it is recorded that "He increased in favour with God and man." <sup>3</sup> They little dreamt at the time what the seed they then planted in the receptive brain would ripen into.

But here we have a problem to solve ; something that is truly wonderful, bordering almost on the marvellous. We involuntarily feel constrained to ask once more, "Whence this wisdom in the carpenter's son ?" "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth ?" He

<sup>1</sup> Matt xiii 54.

<sup>2</sup> John vii. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Luke ii. 52.



might have learnt Jewish law and Jewish tradition in the synagogue there, and with it the sing-song manners and methods of the Jewish scribes. But where did he get his wisdom from, his insight into nature, his power of analysis and of reasoning, so unlike in method from that of the scribes to whom he listened so intently? Did his thirst for knowledge take him to other fountains? Was he acquainted with the Greek science of the time? Or was he a prodigy of Nature, such as she produces now and then to the astonishment of mankind?

There is a probability that he had access to Greek learning. He has been away from his native Nazareth, which he must have left in his youth; for when he returned to it he was already engaged in his mission. Where had he spent the interval? There is the vague rumour that he was in Egypt. If we could only be sure that he was in Alexandria, we should be justified in concluding that he frequented there the seats of learning as he did the debates of the synagogue, and this would go far to explain the source of his education in science and philosophy. (For, despite Renan, we shall have to marvel at his insight into the mysteries of nature.)

Unfortunately the flight into Egypt and his return thence are reported to have taken place in fulfilment of a prophecy; and this circumstance makes the tradition less reliable.

He may have sojourned in Egypt, and this fact may have suggested both the legend and the prophecy. But it is equally possible that the prophecy may have necessitated the legend. The Gospels do not help us out of this difficulty.

Greek science was not unknown in Judæa, however, so that it is not impossible that he may have been acquainted with it. In any case, it is clear that he had a great insight into nature. He was one of the "therapeutæ" or "healers," and judging from the exaggerated accounts of his successes, he must have been skilled in this art far above any other of the guild. Matthew says: "Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom,

and *healing every disease among the people.*" This no doubt is the source of the many miracles which Jesus is said to have performed on the sick. But such a life is an education in itself, and in the case of an observant and reflecting mind often of much greater value than book-learning. His originality of expression seems to indicate that he obtained most of his knowledge at first hand by contemplating nature. But on all such points his biographers are silent. Nor are we told when and how Jesus forsook the carpenter's bench and devoted himself to the preaching of his gospel.

But there is a significant prelude to his "ministry" which we must not pass over lightly: "Then was Jesus led up of the *spirit* into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil."<sup>1</sup> Mark records the same event in these words: "And immediately [that is, after the supposed baptism by John] the *spirit* driveth him into the wilderness, and he was there . . . tempted of Satan." The temptation is also recorded by Luke, who says: "And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil."

The legend as related is too absurd to be considered as history. On the other hand, tradition is too insistent to be ignored. There must be a fact, a substratum of truth, behind it, which gave currency to the legend. What might that be?

<sup>1</sup> Matt iv. 1.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE TEMPTATION

LEGENDARY as is the account of the temptation when taken literally as we find it in the Gospels, there is reason to suppose that it harbours a truth such as many who will read these pages must have experienced at some time.

A youth brought up on conventional lines leaves school and the parental roof, launches out into the world full of cheer and hope—or, as the evangelist expressed it, “full of the holy spirit”—only to suffer shipwreck on his first encounter with the realities of life. His faith receives a stunning blow; the bright world of his imagination dissolves away like a phantom picture; his beliefs are gone; his idols broken; his ideals shattered; desolation and despair in every direction. Thus he is left stranded in a barren, cheerless *wilderness*. At such trying moments the tempter is seldom absent. The reeling brain is lured by far-off visions of escape, of possible success even, but which could be reached by forbidden paths only, by trampling underfoot all that one was taught to value as dear, holy, and precious.

That “wilderness” into which Jesus was “led by the Spirit”—according to one evangelist; or “*driven*” according to another—is real, is still here, right in our very midst; is entered daily by thousands of our fellow-creatures who are there “tempted,” and many of whom—alas!—are daily falling a prey to these temptations. It is the crucible in which souls are being tested and whence they emerge as criminals or—philosophers. Many and devious are the paths of the fallen, according to the temptations to which they fell a prey—power, ambition, wealth—and according to opportunities and circumstances. Thorny

and forbidding is the path of the philosopher, and he that enters on it is greeted by jeers. Truly, "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and *many there be which go in thereat*: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth to life, and *few there be that find it*."<sup>1</sup>

Can this be the true meaning of the "temptation"? Is it perhaps that Jesus spoke of it—having been his own experience, as it needs must have been—in parables, as was his manner, to warn others against false allurements, and that his parable has been taken in a literal sense, as in so many other instances?

I myself am inclined to believe this to be the real fact that has given rise to the legend of the temptation. But whether this be so or not; whether the legend of the temptation be pure invention or not: Jesus the Jew, so well instructed in the laws, traditions, and ceremonials of his people; Jesus the conscientious man we know him to have been, must of necessity have passed through this wilderness of doubt before he flung all these ceremonials aside, and in the face of opposition and rigorous traditions told the people of Judæa: "Ye have heard of them of old times . . . but I say unto you," etc. Neither his bringing up nor his environment was such as to lead to such a climax. The path he had taken was not the one he had been prepared for, or one that was even suspected by himself or by those around him. Such a step is not taken by accident, nor in a sportive mood. Jesus must have seen the "wide gate and the broad way" with all the allurements toward which the multitudes were rushing. He must have been conscious that his own abilities were above rather than below the average, and his chances of success, were he to enter the race as a competitor, reasonable. Yet he chose to enter at the strait gate and on the narrow way, seen by so few, and shunned by most. Such choice is not made without due reflection. Jesus had his "temptations" for certain.

Scant as is the information we possess of the childhood and early youth of Jesus, we are even worse off concern-

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vii. 13-14.

ing his transition period from youth to manhood, from the carpenter's bench to the forum, from the ancient faith and traditions to his new and revolutionary doctrines. And yet, if we take the trouble to piece together the fragments we find scattered in the Gospels, we get glimpses of a picture of sufficient distinctness to enable the mind to supply the missing parts and thus get an insight into the history of his days and the part he played in those stirring events.

Let us make the attempt.

It is a curious coincidence—if coincidence it is—that all the three synoptics (John alone omits to mention it) place the temptation of Jesus after his supposed baptism by John, and date his ministry from that time. I say his supposed baptism, for it is doubtful whether Jesus ever submitted to this ritual. He certainly was not a member of the sect of baptists, and himself never baptized anybody except “with the Holy Ghost”; that is, by an appeal to reason. And yet the two names are mentioned together in a manner which implies some connection.

Who was John? We know very little about him, for the rôle assigned to him in the Christ legend is a subordinate one. He is mentioned as the herald of the Messiah; but as Jesus had nothing to do with the Messiahship, and John had predeceased Jesus, we may dismiss the rôle assigned to him in the Christ-myth with the legend itself.

Having done so, what is there left concerning him? This: He took up a position at a frequented ford of the river and called people to repentance. It is difficult not to recognize in John the ascetic and the religious revivalist; but evidently “the repentance” which he preached was something more than a preparation for a hereafter. So much, at least, is evident from the following passage in Luke—almost the only one concerning John apart from the Christ-myth:—

“And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees; every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. And

the people asked him saying, What shall we do then? He answered and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages" <sup>1</sup>

John clearly attacked what are called the "rights of property."

We may compare with these words of John the following spoken by Jesus. The scribes and Pharisees "bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; and they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. . . . Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers." <sup>2</sup>

Here, at any rate, John and Jesus met on common ground; and we can well understand the hatred and persecution both drew upon themselves from the ruling classes who came in for such a large share of their censure.

It is only from such accidental fragments of some ancient records which have found their way into the Gospels that we can get glimpses of the history of the times and the share which John and Jesus had in them. We can clearly see that there was great discontent in Judæa at the time, and that John and Jesus were both products of the same social unrest. John required the rich to share their wealth with the poor; the publicans were not to exact more than what was appointed to them, and the soldiers were to do no violence.

This is the state of affairs against which both John and Jesus revolted, each in his own way. It was an economic unrest, a revolt against oppression.

John and Jesus seem to have had very little in common apart from their hatred of oppression and injustice.

<sup>1</sup> Luke iii. 9-14.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxiii. 4-14.

John appealed to what—in a restricted sense—is called the religious sentiment. If people were only baptized, they could not act as they did, he thought. Jesus, on the other hand, made a more direct appeal to justice. Of the two, Jesus was the more truly religious. But his was a religion based on knowledge and reason, and therefore was free from ritual. In the words of the evangelist: John baptized with water, and Jesus with “the holy spirit.”

John was cast into prison and eventually executed. We need not heed the pretence that was put forward to justify the act. We know even from that solitary fragment preserved for us in Luke's Gospel what John preached, and also that he had a large following. Herodias may have hated John, and no doubt did all she could to encompass his downfall. But it was his doctrines that were the cause of his undoing. “Herod feared John”:<sup>1</sup> “And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet.”<sup>2</sup>

John was slain with the connivance of “the scribes and Pharisees” because of his championship of the oppressed. “And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus.”<sup>3</sup>

As a lightning flash will pierce the darkness and momentarily illuminate the landscape, so this plain statement of the bald fact that the disciples of John “went and told Jesus” reveals to us the relation that existed between the two reformers.

It is not difficult to imagine the stunning effect the news must have had on a heart and mind such as we know Jesus to have possessed. “When Jesus heard of it”—the evangelist continues—“he departed thence by a ship into a desert place apart; and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities.”<sup>4</sup> We may complete the picture for ourselves.

That John and Jesus did not preach a kingdom in the clouds is obvious. They would never have been molested had they done so. We know from Josephus what a variety of sects existed at the time among the

<sup>1</sup> Mark vi, 20. <sup>2</sup> Matt. xiv. 5. <sup>3</sup> Ibid. xiv. 12. <sup>4</sup> Ibid. xiv. 13.

Jews, side by side, so far apart in doctrine as some believing in a future state while others did not. There was nothing to prevent John or Jesus proclaiming in any of the synagogues that the world would come to an end and that a new kingdom would be established in heaven, had they been so minded. Such a thesis was welcomed for discussion rather than resented. Their offence was that they wanted to establish "the kingdom of heaven" or "the reign of justice" *here on earth*; and that was as great an offence in the days of John and Jesus as it is to-day.

In this survey we have drifted from Jesus the youth as he was listening to the doctors in the synagogue to Jesus the revolutionary who is now in open enmity with "the scribes and Pharisees, the hypocrites" How came this great change about?

The propaganda of Jesus began in earnest after that of John had come to so untimely an end. Those in power thought to choke this new spirit by killing John. But in this they were mistaken, as they soon found out; for behold! one mightier than John came to take his place; one who baptized not with water but *with the holy spirit*.

Jesus, who as youth sat at the feet of the doctors in rapt attention, astonishing them with his devotion no less than his intelligence, we now behold in opposition to them, and the latter seeking his life.

Let us retrace our steps, and see how this strange transformation might have come about.

Jesus grew up under the influence of the scribes and Pharisees. He saw them, when a youth, not as they were, but as they were supposed and seemed to be: guardians of the law, ministers of justice, and fathers of the poor. He loved to listen to their expositions of the Scriptures, and doubtless looked upon them as the incarnation of piety and rectitude, as pillars of the State, as representatives of Moses. In later years he disputed with them, as we know, and boldly challenged their interpretation of the law. But that was not the case when, in his youth, he sat in the midst of them a devout



pupil, eager to be instructed, reverently asking questions, so that "he gained favour with God and man."

It must have been a terrible shock, therefore, when the truth dawned upon him; when he saw oppression and injustice rampant, and beheld "the scribes and Pharisees" as they were—people who did lip-service, but whose hearts were far from what they were preaching.<sup>1</sup>

The inevitable was bound to follow: A revulsion of feeling took possession of his noble soul. His lofty ideals were completely shattered. Priest and Pharisee were no longer to him what hitherto they seemed to be—models of piety, representatives of justice, defenders of the weak. Reverence gave way to loathing. They now appeared like whited sepulchres, which indeed appeared beautiful outward, but which within were full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness; who outwardly appeared righteous unto men, but within were full of hypocrisy and iniquity.<sup>2</sup>

Those only who have had a similar experience can possibly gauge the anguish of such disillusionment. No words are adequate to describe it. It is not so much the sudden loss of something which we have prized beyond all else, as the discovery that what we have so treasured was the very opposite of what we supposed it to be. It is as if you had been wandering in a beautiful garden, where luscious fruits delighted the eye. You pick some, and when about to put it to your lips, in full anticipation of its enjoyment, it suddenly changes into something vile, repellent, loathsome, which you throw away in disgust. You are about to pick another, when you find the tree has vanished, that the garden itself was but an illusion, and that instead of being in Paradise you are in the Valley of Hinnom, surrounded by all manner of "extortion and excess."

This is the "wilderness" into which Jesus was "driven by the spirit," as the author of Mark so expressively puts it. The wilderness is real, though not one located in space. Into it are driven daily many noble souls, lovers of their kind, to be tormented there by the weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

<sup>1</sup> Mark vii. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxiii. 27-28.

It is a mental state ; the anguish of a shipwrecked soul, whose faith is lost and whose hopes are shattered. Surrounded by darkness and desolation, everything appears then at its worst. The nobler the soul the greater the desolation. The deeper the love the more intense the revulsion. The beautiful dream of life has dissolved into the nightmare of reality.

Those who expounded the law so glibly ; those who preached the eternal justice of God ; those who sat in Moses' seat charged with administering the law, with protecting the innocent, and succouring the weak ; behold ! they were but whited sepulchres. Behind those pious faces there lurked serpents and vipers full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Everything had suddenly changed for the worse. Even the Temple, the place where he loved to spend every spare moment listening to the exposition of the law, had lost its attraction and came in for his bitter sarcasm. " It is written, ' My house shall be called the house of prayer,' but ye have made it a den of thieves." <sup>1</sup>

It is the wail of a soul hungering for righteousness, stranded in the midst of moral desolation. Doubt and despair take possession of it, and then—comes the temptation.

The temptation, too, is real and terrible, as is the wilderness ; though not in the sense in which a childish ignorance conceived and pictured it. The tempter is a cynic, begotten of our own pessimism, and the temptation is a wholly subjective affair. It is this ghoul that suggests the thoughts on which the mind feeds in such moments. The form or manner only of the temptation differs with different persons ; the substance is ever the same. The whisperings of this ghoulish demon may be summarized in the following well-worn phrases, which have done, and are doing, duty on thousands of similar occasions : " There is nothing wrong with the world ; it is you who are acting the fool." " There is no such thing as abstract justice except in your own diseased imagination." " The world is good and pleasant to live in for those who know how to use it." " The plums

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxi. 13.

are for the wide-awake, only for those who know how to pick them. Why bother about the others? Did they ask you to do so? Do they want you to do so? Do they thank you even for espousing their cause?" "There has always been oppression and always will be." "Nature knows no mercy. She fights with fangs and claws, and the weakest must go to the wall. You cannot alter it, do what you will. Your only plan is to see that you yourself are not among the oppressed, the downtrodden. Your business is to look after yourself."

If the temptation had not been mentioned in the Gospels, we should still be safe in assuming it to have happened, as it was bound to do. Nor is it conceivable that Jesus should not have warned his hearers of the dangers of such temptations, reminded as he must have been of his own mental conflicts. Very little has been preserved to us of what he said: a few hundred words is all that we possess of the utterances of an enthusiastic preacher. Yet even among these we have the prayer "lead us not into temptation," and exhortations against riches, titles, dignities or display, which might serve as occasions for temptation.

The legend concerning the temptation is unquestionably based on fact.

## CHAPTER XV

### AFTER THE STORM

THREE temptations only are recorded as having been tried by the devil on Jesus, but they are significantly representative. They are the promise of wealth, of dominion, or suicide.

No doubt Jesus had been advised by his friends to leave alone things that were beyond him and to devote himself to the furthering of his own interests. Equally certain is it that he must have pondered a good deal about what was the call of duty. Should he shut his eyes to all the abuses he saw and "mind his own business"? Was he to ignore the wrongs, so as not to jeopardize his own chances of success? These and such-like scruples are regarded by many as foolish; yet there are, and always have been, persons to whom such thoughts have been a source of great concern—or there would not be a civilized community to day: people who think that by ignoring public wrongs, lest they may disadvantage themselves, they become abettors of those wrongs.

"Let things alone that do not concern you, that you cannot alter, and seek your own welfare," is the stereotyped advice in such cases. Good advice, too, and well meant; but it does not meet every case, nor can it satisfy every temperament. We all seek happiness; but the conceptions of what constitutes happiness vary. What is bliss to one person may be mortification to another. Jesus saw misery, oppression, and wrongdoing. In such surroundings what happiness could there be for him? Is he to seek wealth? Would wealth content him? At best it could satisfy his material needs only. But "Man liveth not by bread alone"; he has intellectual and moral wants.

Power? Dominion over others? What if he conquered the whole world and lost his own soul? And a soul such as his would certainly be lost if all that it could do would be to batten on the toil of others and to lord it over them.

Then what other way is there out of this misery? Suicide? The coward's last refuge? That would be death indeed; death of heart, of soul, and of body. Get thee hence, Satan! Get thee hence!

The storm had spent itself, and calmer as well as wiser counsels prevailed. Or, in the poetic language of the Gospel narrative, "Then the devil leaveth him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto him."<sup>1</sup>

It is impossible to credit the dull, unimaginative scribe of the Gospel with this beautiful imagery, and I feel constrained to claim it as a fragment of one of those inimitable parables, with which Jesus illuminated his discourses. Since the temptation as narrated in the Gospels could not have happened, and as the scribes could not have invented it, I am inclined to the belief that it is an incomplete and garbled report of a genuine discourse of Jesus, based on his own experiences, as indeed were all his sermons.

Both wilderness and storm were subjective states. Jesus may have retired into solitude, but surely not into a barren waste, so alien to his nature. Such surroundings might have suited a temperament such as that of John the Baptist, or of Jeremiah, or of Mahomet, or even of Paul, but is unthinkable in connection with Jesus.

It is far more probable that he would seek seclusion under the shade of an olive-tree, in one of the groves of the neighbouring hills. It is in such surroundings that he loved to meditate, as is shown by his character, his thoughts, his language. The fruit indicates the kind of tree it must have grown on. A barren waste could never have inspired the thoughts of Jesus, nor have suggested his many illuminating metaphors and parables, all taken from living nature. The tree, the vine, the

<sup>1</sup> Matt. iv. 72.

grass, the lily, the seed ; the plough, the sower, the reaper ; the garden, the vineyard, the field, the meadow ; the birds, the sheep, the shepherd ; not forgetting the children, ever present in his mind, were all laid under contribution. The very postulates of his philosophy<sup>1</sup> were suggested by the fruit-bearing trees.

It was objects like these that his imagination fed on ; amid such surroundings that his soul could breathe. It was on a mountain where his most notable sermons were delivered, the hills and sea-shore where the people flocked to hear him ; and it was in a garden on the banks of Cedron<sup>2</sup> where the soldiers found him when they effected his arrest.

Not in a barren wilderness, therefore, but in some place throbbing with life do I see, in imagination, the young philosopher brooding over the iniquities of the strong and the sufferings of the weak. Sadness in his face—the eyes turned inwards, oblivious for the moment to the scene around him, conscious only of the storm that raged within. How truly he said in later years, remembering probably his former experiences, “ If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness ! ”<sup>3</sup> The light that was in him just then was darkness indeed.

Around him, however, quite another world was in full action. The sun shone, the birds sang, the butterflies danced in the air, the very insects hummed joyfully as they skipped from flower to flower. It was the “ kingdom of God ” in full action. There was no need for the angels to *come* ; they were there all the time, “ ministering unto him,” but he perceived them not. He saw only the darkness within, and heard only the whisperings of the tempter.

But gradually light entered from without. The scene around him claimed his attention and gave new direction

<sup>1</sup> “ A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit ; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit ”

<sup>2</sup> “ For Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples ” (John xviii. 2.)

<sup>3</sup> Matt. vi. 23.

to his thoughts. How different was the world before him to the one he contemplated ! Peace, joy, happiness everywhere around, and for every creature—except man. “ Foxes have holes ; the birds of the air have nests ; but man has not where to lay his head ” How happy the birds are : yet they neither toil nor gather into barns. The very grass of the fields, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, is cared for. Is man not much better than these ? Two sparrows are sold for a farthing, and they are cared for. Is not man of many times more value than they ?

Reflections such as these must have engaged the mind of Jesus as he slowly emerged from darkness into light.

We cannot follow the workings of the mind. With more than lightning speed the “ spirit ” that is working in us sends the shuttle through the maze of unknown and unsuspected threads that lie hidden in our complex organization, combining and separating, until order emerges out of chaos. Then result the “ thoughts ” or “ ideas ” we become conscious of ; but how they have been produced is hidden from us, even though our own brain was the workshop in which they took form.

It is not the *conscious ego* that works out the new thought ; it merely becomes aware of the thought when completed. Certain ideas cross and recross our mind, and are either not heeded at all or are rejected with the same lightning speed that they appear. The conscious ego knows not what to do with them or what to make of them. With an insistence that will not be denied, the same thought recurs again and again, knocking at the door of consciousness, as it were, trying to deliver a message, but cannot make itself understood. Then all of a sudden a light bursts in upon us, revealing a new idea. We now see and understand, and marvel how it was that we did not see it before, or how we could have failed to understand what now is so plain and clear. We then call it—not inaptly, either—an inspiration, or an intuition.

What is taking place in the mental laboratory is something akin to the process of crystallization, where innumerable shapeless, invisible, minute particles group them-

selves into symmetrical forms and as such become visible to the eye. In like manner the many disjointed and apparently disparate or discordant ideas that were slumbering in the mind range themselves harmoniously into a mental image which—though made up of old familiar material—is to the mind a new revelation. That happens especially where there is a strong desire, a longing, an ardent wish for something the mind cannot express or define in words. The soul feels the need of something, but knows not what ; desires to express itself, and knows not how ; when all at once, in a sudden flood of light, there stands revealed what in our mental darkness we were groping for

Then, and then only, do we recognize certain stages in the process. We *remember*—but we did not cause or produce the thoughts—at least not consciously. The *mind*—subtle agency, whatever it may be!—did its work of itself, and we become conscious of the result only after the process is complete.

Throughout his career Jesus insisted on “the law.”<sup>1</sup> The idea seemed to have obsessed his being, as was but natural. It was the first theoretical knowledge he had acquired ; the first seed that had taken root in his fertile brain. His whole and sole conception of the universe was a God who created everything and whose *will* was the law that ruled the world. But he did not at first discriminate between the “logos” of God and the “nomos” of man, or “the *will* of God” and “the commandments of man” ; and so he could not understand—as many are unable to do so to-day—how it came that the “law” could be so violated ; that the will of God could be set at nought by man, and that God should suffer it to be so !

This has always been the great stumbling-block to every thinker. *There is evil in the world which revolts and outrages the human soul, and is God indifferent ?* This

<sup>1</sup> Not always so translated, however. He used the words “logos,” “entole,” and “nomos” synonymously, as meaning a “commandment” or “injunction,” but in the translation these terms are sometimes rendered by “words,” “sayings,” etc.



is the root-problem of religion: justice is outraged, crime is stalking victoriously with head erect, whilst virtue is being trampled underfoot. And God, omnipotent God, allows it to be so?

Whilst meditating this problem—not in a wilderness, but in the midst of living active nature, the birds chirping, the insects humming, the cattle browsing—the new light burst in upon him. For the first time he perceived how each act had its own definite consequences, and carried with it its own rewards and punishments. As ye sow, so shall ye reap. “Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?”<sup>1</sup> “A good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. For every tree is known by his own fruit.”<sup>2</sup> That is God’s law; it is the will of our Father which is in heaven. And even so it is with man. “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh”<sup>3</sup> The misery is due to no divine decree, but to the ignorance of man. The law of God is not violated, and never can be violated; for each act is followed by its own “reward.”<sup>4</sup> In each case the law is fulfilled to the very jot and tittle. It is man’s *disregard* of this fact which is the cause of his sufferings. For God makes the sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. But man being evil, how can he expect good things? “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.”<sup>5</sup>

Amidst and behind all the perplexing chaos Jesus now perceived harmony, law, and order—a reign of law so entirely different from the reign of man. This was “the reign of God” or “the reign of heaven,”<sup>6</sup> which has

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vii. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Luke vi. 43-4.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. vi. 45.

<sup>4</sup> Cp. “Verily I say unto you, they have their rewards”; i.e. the natural consequences of their acts.

<sup>5</sup> Matt. xv. 10.

been mistranslated into English as "*kingdom* of heaven," and which Paul and his ignorant followers took to mean a locality in the clouds. He perceived an order of things which he did not see before—a "law" which could not be ignored without incurring the consequences ; which affected rich and poor, high and low, the weak and the powerful alike · a law that was no respecter of persons. In that law Jesus saw "the will of God," or, as we to-day so clumsily and so inaptly call it, "the law of causation," or "the reign of law."

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE "METAMORPHOSIS" OF JESUS

THOSE who look upon religion as the negation of nature and natural laws, and upon Jesus as the central figure in this system of negation, will have read with incredulity the statement I have just made. Yet nothing can be more certain than that Jesus perceived the basic principle on which are based the physical sciences, and which—for want of a better name—is called "the law of causation." He perceived order in nature where caprice seemed to rule; a Cosmos in the midst of seeming chaos.

Jesus was not a mystic, though he must have seemed such to most of his contemporaries. But the difficulty he had in making himself understood lay in the ignorance of his audience rather than in any desire on his part to veil his teachings in mystic utterances. And if he has the appearance of mysticism to the present generation the fault rests with the translators and interpreters, who were looking for some supernatural meaning in every word that Jesus uttered, and so imported mysticism where really none existed. Jesus can be understood only if we dismiss from our mind all idea of any hidden, secret signification, and give to his words the obvious common-sense meaning they purport to have.

Jesus saw, understood, and spoke of the facts of nature which we see and speak of to-day. But he did not, of course, use our terminology. What we to-day call "science" had no existence then, and there was no settled scientific vocabulary. But the facts and phenomena which are the subject-matter of the sciences did exist, were known, and the underlying principles have been applied in a thousand different ways by people who knew

nothing of theories or abstract principles; just as they are applied to-day by the mass of mankind without understanding the theory of what they are doing.

It is true, therefore, in a technical sense only that there was no scientific knowledge in the days of Jesus. Long before the facts of experience had been generalized and made into a science, mankind made practical use of that knowledge without understanding the theory. In the words of John Stuart Mill, "Mankind judged of evidence, and often correctly, before logic was a science, or they never could have made it one. And they executed great mechanical works before they understood the laws of mechanics." The knowledge of facts always precedes the knowledge of theory.

The husbandman who sows seed in the expectation of being able to harvest by and by a crop of the same kind; the mason who piles up stones perpendicularly so as to form a wall; the savage who hollows out a tree or builds a boat so as to enable him to keep himself afloat on water; the sailor who manipulates an outstretched sheet of canvas so that the wind shall carry his craft to where he wishes to go; the huntsman who by means of a bow propels an arrow with force and precision: are one and all acting on the unconscious assumption of "the law of causation" and the regularities (or consistencies rather) of nature, without being aware of the fact, and without having any knowledge of the laws which are underlying their operations. That has always been so, and is the case to-day with the great mass of mankind. "The light shone in the darkness, and the darkness perceived it not."<sup>1</sup>

But there have always been a few men of extraordinary genius who, far in advance of the learning of their time, have generalized recurrent phenomena into "laws" which enabled them to understand the theory of what they were doing and to lay down rules for their own as well as for the guidance of others. There were men who saw and understood the workings of nature before

<sup>1</sup> John could not have been the author of these words, for he did not understand their meaning.

that knowledge had been reduced to text-book formulæ. The heavens had been studied and eclipses of the sun had been foretold centuries before the time of Jesus, or before astronomy had been made into a science. People knew how to extract metals from their ores; how to convert hide into leather; how to build, dig, delve, sow, spin, weave, and practise scores of arts—biological, chemical, and mechanical—before biology, chemistry, or mechanics had been thought of as a science. The mass of mankind have learnt to perform these operations by routine, with little more understanding—if any—than is possessed by an animal that knows how to build a nest, procure food, or evade an enemy. To few only is it given to reflect, to reason, and to penetrate into the mysteries of nature—the “kingdom of God.”

Jesus was one of these privileged few. Gifted with extraordinary powers of perception and intuition, he saw what it is given to very few to perceive: law and order in nature, in the midst of seeming chaos. To-day a child is instructed at school that nothing happens without an adequate cause; that the world is governed by immutable principles. But, needless to say, that was not the case in the Judæa of the days of Jesus. The rabbis taught, forsooth, that the world was ruled by God; but that was a capricious, a lawless God, and the “laws” which Jesus was taught by them were—as he found out later—chiefly “the commandments of men.”<sup>1</sup>

But there was another school, outside the synagogue, which Jesus also frequented, and it was there, under the canopy of heaven, that the mysteries of the “kingdom of God” were revealed unto him. It was there where he beheld the ravens and the lilies; saw the tiny mustard seed develop into a shrub large enough to afford shelter for birds; observed how each tree produced fruit after its own kind; and witnessed how, under the benign influence of sunshine and rain, the world renewed itself every spring. And in all this he recognized the will of a heavenly Father who, like a loving parent, dispenses his blessings to all his creatures alike and without dis-

<sup>1</sup> Mark vii. 7,

tion. He saw what we call "the *reign* of law," but what *he* called "the *reign* of God"; which in translation became "the *kingdom* of God"; and which ignorance and superstition have interpreted to mean a *territory* in the clouds. Only by giving natural meanings to his words does Jesus become intelligible. But if we ascribe to them meanings which the evangelists and later theologians have read into them, they become utter nonsense.

By way of illustration I will quote some verses from Matthew, and then show, from parallel passages in Luke and in Mark, how their sense has been twisted into something quite different from their obvious meaning:—

"And the disciples came and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know *the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven* [i.e. "the secrets of nature"], but to them it is not given . . .<sup>1</sup> Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand."<sup>2</sup>

I submit that the meaning is perfectly plain. But let us see now what the other evangelists make of the same text. Luke transcribes it as follows: "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand."<sup>3</sup>

In Matthew, it will be noted, Jesus explained that he spoke in parables so that the multitude should be able to understand what he said; whereas according to Luke he spoke in parables purposely so that "they might not understand."

<sup>1</sup> The omitted verse reads as follows: "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath." I will expand the sentence so as to make its meaning more apparent, and will print in *italics* the added words: "For whosoever hath *understanding of these things*, to him *knowledge* shall be given, and he shall have more abundance of *it*; but whosoever hath not *that knowledge already*, from him shall be taken away even that *little knowledge* he hath"; i.e. he would only be more confused than before.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xiii. 10-13.

<sup>3</sup> Luke viii. 10.

Mark still further improves on Luke, inasmuch as he assigns a reason for suppressing the truth from the masses. He says: "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto *them that are without* [i.e. not of the elect] all these things are done in parables: that seeing they may see and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand, *lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.*"<sup>1</sup>

Some of the "saints" were evidently afraid of overcrowding in the new kingdom, and favoured a restricted immigration. But as for Jesus, far from trying to hide the truth from the multitude by putting the lighted candle under a bushel, he made it the aim and purpose of his life to spread the knowledge thus revealed to him to all the world, without distinction of race or creed.

Jesus saw "the kingdom of heaven"<sup>2</sup> and realized the difference between it and "the kingdom," or "rule" of man. That was the great mystery that was revealed to him, and for which he offered up this touching prayer of thanks: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight"<sup>3</sup>

And that is also what he referred to when, addressing his disciples, he said: "Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."<sup>4</sup>

Jesus in his inmost heart could never have shared, consciously that is, the crude and harsh conceptions of God we find, for instance, in Nahum, and in the much later writings of Paul. He probably had not paid special

<sup>1</sup> Mark iv. 11-12. Compare also, "Many are called, but few are chosen."

<sup>2</sup> I propose to retain the wording of the R.V., but in the altered sense as repeatedly explained.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xi. 25-6.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. xiii. 16-17.

attention to the matter up to then. During his meditations, however, old ideas were more closely examined, and had to yield to new conceptions. God to him was no longer a capricious, moody tyrant, but a loving Father who dispenses his bounties to the just and unjust alike.

And Jesus himself was no longer the Jew merely, but a member of the human race. Henceforth he believed that "whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister."<sup>1</sup>

This is the new gospel which Jesus desired should be preached to all the world; the light that was to be set on a hill so that it could not be hid; and which was to give safety to all those who accepted the new gospel, had faith in it, and acted up to it.

His conceptions of God, of mankind, of the world underwent a complete change, and old relationships appeared to him now in quite a new perspective. In the language of the Gospels, Jesus was "metamorphosed"—that is, he was "a changed man"; but in the English translation the word has stupidly been rendered "transfigured." And thus it will be seen that some historical substratum may be found even for so far-fetched a legend as the "metamorphosis" or "transfiguration" of Jesus.

Let us re-read the account of this supposed miracle, in the light of these reflections. After the cruel execution of John, Jesus retired into solitude; or, in the language of the evangelist, "he was driven of the devil into the wilderness."

When he retired his body was full of darkness: he was a pessimist. When he reappeared, after his meditations, "his face did shine as the sun, his raiment was white as the light";<sup>2</sup> and to complete the picture we need only remember the cheerful message with which he greeted the multitude—now no longer strangers, but each of them a brother or a sister: "Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven. . . . Ye are the salt of the earth. . . . Ye are the light of the world. . . . Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xii. 50.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. xvii. 2.



Jesus had changed indeed. He retired as a pessimist and reappeared as an optimist; radiant, hopeful, and self-confident. "And the people were astonished at his doctrine, for he taught as one having authority and not as the scribes"; as one who had Moses to the right, and Elias to the left of him.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This figure of speech has survived to this day in a Jewish prayer in which occurs the following passage: ". . . and let Michael be to the right of me, Gabriel to the left of me, and Ariel in front of me."

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE TIMES, THE PEOPLE, AND THE CONDITIONS OF JUDÆA IN THE DAYS OF JESUS

THE "ministry" of Jesus commenced in earnest after the death of John. The word "ministry," however, which is commonly applied to the propaganda of Jesus, is as inappropriate as it is misleading. It presupposes a cult of which Jesus is supposed to have been both founder and high-priest. But there was no such special cult in existence in the days of Jesus for which he was in any sense responsible, or which would justify the titles applied to him by Paul, such as "Minister," "Captain of Salvation," "Apostle" or "High-Priest of our Profession." The "profession" did not exist in the days of Jesus, so he could not have been its "minister" or its "high-priest."

All these designations refer to the "Christ" of Paul; belong to a subsequent generation; and to apply them to Jesus is to commit an anachronism.

Jesus is best described as a *prophet* in the old Hebrew sense of the word; that is, he was philosopher, teacher, friend and guide; one who taught and counselled; who took a keen interest in public affairs, denounced abuses, and championed the cause of the weak and the oppressed. John did not initiate—as is implied in the Gospels—the movement of which he became leader, and in which leadership he was followed by Jesus. Both John and Jesus were the products of their time and country; the *result*—and not the *cause*—of a *social unrest* which then agitated the people of Judæa.

It was not a religious revival, but one of those sporadic outbursts of disaffection caused by an evil which is as old

as is organized society, and which, alas! is still with us. History is full of parallel cases, and our own times afford examples in plenty.

The problem that John and Jesus tried to solve was the same which, some seven centuries earlier, made Isaiah exclaim :—

He looked for justice, but behold violence; for righteousness, but behold a cry Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field till there be no room, and ye be made to dwell alone in the midst of the land (v. 7-8)

Three centuries later the same cry of distress was raised by Nehemiah :—

We, our sons and our daughters, are many, let us get for them *corn that we may eat and live* . . . We are mortgaging our fields, and our vineyards, and our houses. . . . We have borrowed money for the king's tribute upon our fields and vineyards . . . we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and some of our daughters are brought into bondage already, neither is it in our power to help it, *for other men have our fields and vineyards* (v. 2-5).

The same distress made John the Baptist proclaim —

Now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire (Luke iii. 9).

Is it necessary—or rather, *should* it be necessary—to point out that the revolution which John contemplated was *social* and not *cosmic*? The answers he is reported to have given to the people who asked him what they should do leave no room for any doubt: "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise" (ibid. 11).

John obviously belonged to the class of reformers known as communists. And that communism was actually adopted by certain sects in those days is plainly stated in the Gospels,<sup>1</sup> in Acts,<sup>2</sup> and is attested by Josephus. The social changes proposed by John must therefore be regarded as history; whereas his supposed *Messianic*

<sup>1</sup> Matt. x. 9-11; Mark vi. 8-11; Luke ix. 3-4, xxii. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Acts ii. 44-5, iv. 32.

*mission* is based on *Scripture prophecy*, unthought of during his lifetime or that of Jesus

Jesus is contemporary and immediate successor of John in the leadership of the *social revolution*—for as such we must regard the turmoil which then agitated the people of Judæa. It was the same old cry which Jesus raised when he said that those in power “fastened heavy burdens on men’s shoulders, grievous to be borne, which they themselves did not move with one of their fingers” It was the eternal lament of the weak against the oppression of the strong, and there is not a shred of admissible evidence in the Gospels or elsewhere that the commotion of which Jesus was the central figure was anything but *temporal* and *social*; or that either John or Jesus had contemplated any other but social reforms. All the expectations of *cosmic changes* belong to a later generation, to a movement led—and in its essential features inaugurated—by Paul.

We do not need the testimony of the evangelists—although it is available and unmistakable—to know what the people of those days asked for, since we can still hear the same lament in every country all over the face of the globe, the burden of which is, *Give us corn, that we may eat and live.*

John was not beheaded because he baptized people into a *future bliss*; and Jesus was not crucified because he threatened—as is falsely alleged—to annihilate the world and to revolutionize the *government of heaven*. They were both put to death because they proposed changes in the social order which were to take place then and there, to benefit the *living*, and not the dead: in short, because they “perverted the people” (Luke xxiii. 2), and because the people “accounted them prophets.”

Not until Paul put forth his theory of “Christ” and the new “kingdom” in the clouds was there any question of *cosmic changes*; and these, as we shall see in a subsequent chapter, caused no uneasiness to either priests or princes.

The Gospel narratives may be likened to a picture superimposed on another picture, depicting the same

actors but in new characters, new groupings, new colourings, and in entirely new perspectives.

What makes it so difficult—*laborious* would perhaps be the better word to use here—to discover the true history of Jesus and his times, is not so much the want of reliable data as this superimposed phantasmagoria which confuses and obscures the outlines of the underlying facts.

The authors of the Gospels were neither eye-witnesses of the events which they recorded nor unbiased historians. On the contrary, they were avowedly sectarians and partisans, whose first and foremost duty it was to establish, promulgate, and defend *the faith* in which they believed, *and to believe in which was the essence of their creed.*

Writing under such conditions impartiality or soundness of judgment is impossible, even to writers who possessed some critical acumen—which the evangelists did not. They neither examined nor doubted—*their creed forbade them to do so*—but with childish credulity accepted whatever tradition recorded, whether the matter related to the historical Jesus or the mythical “Christ,” and attributed all such lore indiscriminately to “the Lord Jesus Christ.” And from such blurred and distorted misconceptions they wrote down what—in their imagination—they saw *just at the moment of writing*. For not only did each one of the evangelists see the same thing differently, but the same writer saw a different picture with every turn of the kaleidoscope—that is, with every new anecdote which came to hand—never noticing that the new incident which he recorded was inconsistent with something he had set down previously.

Here is one illustration in place of many which might be cited. In Matt. (xv. 17-20), Jesus explains that “to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man,” but “*those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart ; AND THEY DEFILE A MAN.*”

Yet, immediately following this dictum, a tale is told in which most uncharitable words are put into the mouth of Jesus. “A woman of Canaan came out of the same

coasts and cried unto Jesus, saying, *Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David* ; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil " To this appeal for *mercy to a suffering child* Jesus is at first deaf ; then refuses help on the ground that " he was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel " ; and when the distressed mother persisted with her petition—" worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me "—Jesus, still obdurate, rebuffed her, saying, " It is not meet to take the children's bread and *cast it to the dogs* "

This most improbable tale immediately follows the statement that " it is the things which proceed out of the mouth which defile the man," and is told by the same evangelist who, in an earlier chapter, records the following injunction of Jesus : " Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you."

But just then the evangelist's object was to show the great potency of " faith in the Lord Jesus Christ," and he thought of nothing else. The harshness of Jesus was necessary so as to emphasize the power of faith. For in the end Jesus unbends, mollified not by the distress of the suffering child, but by the *faith* of the pleading mother. " Woman," exclaims the appeased Christ, "*great is thy faith : be it unto thee even as thou wilt.*"

To conclude : what the evangelists recorded were not facts, but subjective mental representations of things which—in the words of Luke—" were most surely believed " among them.

If this is kept clearly and constantly in mind, then it is not impossible to extract some historical truths out of the Gospel narratives. Then the very errors, contradictions and inconsistencies may be made to disclose some facts which were unknown to the writers themselves, or which they failed to interpret correctly. It is not only what they testify to that we have to examine—we must sift the whole of their depositions, and weigh the evidence of all their statements, independently of what the writers themselves believed to be true, or what

they intended to prove. We must have regard to their psychology, as well as the circumstances in which they were placed when writing their records.

In the following I will show how this method may be usefully applied ; and I will select a theme for my object-lesson which—at the same time—will enable me to correct a grave historical blunder which has brought undeserved contumely—often tribulation, even—on innocent people. In this way I hope to perform an act of belated justice to “ the Jews,” who have been charged with the murder of the noblest Son which their race, or any other race, has ever produced.

The charge, as far as the *race* is concerned, is as unjust as it is historically untrue—as I will presently prove on the evidence of those who have made the accusation. Happily, we can do so without having to make counter-charges of malice or dishonesty against the evangelists. We have just seen how, in their zeal to magnify the power of faith in Jesus, they attributed to him most uncharitable conduct towards a mother in distress. In like manner—that is, acting in ignorance, but in perfect good faith—they saddled “ the Jews ”—that is, the nation—with a crime which has been committed by a corrupt priesthood—Jews, certainly, but not the Jewish nation—not at the bidding of the people, but in defiance of them, and with the aid of alien soldiery.

But the same witnesses who thus inadvertently made this accusation have also supplied overwhelming evidence to the contrary : that is, they have testified that “ the Jews ”—the Jewish people—not only did not hate Jesus, but that they loved, revered, and—if we accept the exaggerated language of the evangelists—idolized him. Indeed, it is the love of the people which is given as the reason why the ruling powers feared and hated the Great Tribune

Throughout the Gospels we meet with such glaringly contradictory statements, which testify to the unreliability of the evangelists as historians. Nor was the writing of history their object. They wrote not as they *saw*, but as they were taught to *believe*. To them Jesus

was *Christ*; his followers were *Christians*; and his antagonists were, of course, *Jews*. It did not occur to them that in those days there was no *Christ* and there were no *Christians*, but Jews only. They did not, they could not remember—for they did not know—that the man who was to confer the *post-mortem* honour of Christship on Jesus was then not yet born, or could at most have been an infant only.

All this must be kept in mind when sifting the evidence of such witnesses.

It is quite true—there can be no doubt about it—that those who brought Jesus to the cross were Jews. But they were not the Jewish *people* (as the phrase “the Jews” implies, and as is commonly believed) any more than it was the English people who strangled William Tyndale for having translated the Bible into English; who cast the author of *Pilgrim's Progress* into prison for preaching the Gospels, who placed Daniel Defoe in the pillory for being a Dissenter; or who, quite recently, forcibly ejected Charles Bradlaugh from the House of Commons, whither he had been sent by a section of the *English people*.

If whole nations were to be condemned in perpetuity for the misdeeds of the few, then there is no nation which would not incur like condemnation for similar crimes.

This, however, by the way only. The important point is that what the evangelists *allege* is disproved by the facts which they record, as I will show by subjecting these accusing witnesses to a kind of cross-examination.

Let us note as a first fact that friends and foes of Jesus were *all of them Jews*, both in race and religion, *and Jews only*. Indeed if we cared to accept as true the answer which Jesus is credited with having made to the Canaanitish woman (“I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel”)<sup>1</sup> Jesus would have nothing whatever to do with any but Jews. There certainly were no non-Jewish “Christians”—even if we admitted this description for the followers of Jesus during his lifetime—until many years later Paul, meeting with but scant success

<sup>1</sup> Which the present writer does not accept as true.



among the Jews, turned to the "heathen" in search of converts.

Another indisputable fact—notwithstanding the implied and often explicit statements to the contrary—is the great popularity of Jesus among his *contemporary* compatriots. His following is always described as consisting of "great multitudes," and the people as coming "from all parts" to hear him.

"There were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trod one upon another," says Luke (xii. 1). Mark's testimony is as follows: "A great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judæa, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude" (iii. 7-8).

According to the same witness (i. 45) his following was so great and persistent that "Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in open places; and they came to him from every quarter." John's testimony (xii. 12-13) is, "On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm-trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord." In Luke (xix. 2-4) we read "Zaccheus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus, and could not for the press because he was little of stature, so he ran before and climbed up into a sycomore-tree to see him, for he (Jesus) was to pass that way." Matthew (xxi. 8-9) adds his testimony to the rest: "And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strewed them in the way, and the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hosanna, says Cruden's *Concordance*, is here used as "a form of acclamation, of blessing, or wishing one well." The word has no such meaning, and is nowhere used in this sense. Hosanna means "help," and does not connote joy or the waving of palm leaves, but rather suggests despair and the wringing of hands. It is a cry of distress, an appeal

There is not a feature in the Gospels on which the evangelists are more emphatic or more unanimous than as to the popularity of Jesus among "the Jews"; and their testimony on this point is not the less valuable because it is given incidentally rather than intentionally.<sup>1</sup>

We accept their testimony on this point *because* it is tradition which they are recording, and not their own deliberate opinion. For such renown handed down by popular tradition in connection with a man who had been executed as a common felon can be explained only on the ground that he had a large and sympathetic following.

Jesus was not hated by the *people*, but by their *oppressors*: "the *high-priests*" and the "*elders*" of the people, "the *scribes*" and the "*Pharisees*"; that is, by them who "laid heavy burdens on the shoulders of men." And the hatred of the ruling classes<sup>2</sup> is the strongest evidence of the love and reverence which *the people* had for the Tribune who championed their cause. For "the people accounted Jesus a prophet," AND THAT IS WHY THE AUTHORITIES FEARED HIM.

There would have been no occasion to fear Jesus had his followers been few or insignificant people only. But his fame spread, his influence grew apace, and his doctrines

for succour or relief, as, for instance, when (2 Sam. xiv. 4) "the woman of Tekoah . . . fell on her face to the ground, and did obeisance, and said, *Help, O king*", or when Jeremiah (xxx. 7) appeals to God, "O Lord, *save the people, the remnant of Israel*" Cf. also 2 Kings vi. 25; Josh. x. 5, Psalms xli. 1, xx. 10, xxviii. 2, cxviii. 25, lxxxvi. 16, etc.

<sup>1</sup> The attitude of Jews of later generations towards *Christ* has nothing whatever to do with their reception of the real Jesus. The distinction between "Jew" and "Christian," with its race hatred, did not exist until Paul abrogated the Jewish law and carried his gospel to the Gentiles; thus not merely establishing an entirely new system of faith, but at the same time sowing the seeds of enmity and discord between his converts and his former co-religionists. The subject will be dealt with in a succeeding chapter, when it will be shown *on the evidence of the same witnesses* that the hostility of Jews was against the Christ of Paul, and not against the historical Jesus. Later generations, of course, confused the two. But this is a sin which is common to both Jew and Christian, and is traceable to the contention of Paul that his Christ was the Jesus resurrected.

<sup>2</sup> Wrongly described in the Gospels as "scribes and Pharisees," since many of these were ardent followers of Jesus.

found favour with people of all classes; for among his followers "were Pharisees and doctors of the law<sup>1</sup> sitting by, which were come *out of every town* of Galilee and Judæa and Jerusalem" (Luke v. 17). The situation became alarming. "The Pharisees, therefore, said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after him" (John xii. 19).

"And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. But when they sought to lay hands on him, *they feared the multitude*, because *they took him for a prophet*" (Matt xxi 45-46).

"Then assembled together the *chief priests*, and the *scribes*, and the *elders* of the people . . . and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty and kill him. But they said, Not on the feast day, *lest there be an uproar among the people*" (Matt xxvi. 3-5 and Mark xiv. 1-2).

"And *the scribes* and *chief priests* heard it, and sought how they might destroy him; for they feared Jesus because *all the people was astonished at his doctrine*" (Mark xi 18; Luke xxii. 2).

What a different picture these admissions reveal to the one conveyed by the unsupported allegations of the same witnesses!

<sup>1</sup> Including members of the Sanhedrin even—e g Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, etc

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE ALLEGED MESSIAHSHIP OF JESUS

Now the axe is laid unto the root of the tree every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire—LUKE iii 9

As before stated, the story of the real Jesus is overlaid by that of the mythical *Christ*. When this covering picture is removed, an entirely different one meets the eye. Angels and demons disappear, and their place is taken by real men and women engaged in the ordinary pursuits of everyday life, swayed by motives, passions, strifes and conflicts such as mankind has always been subject to. battling with troubles which are as old as the human race, and with which we ourselves are all too well acquainted. After having removed this superimposed phantasmagoria, there stands revealed before our eyes a picture of things which look real and natural, which in many respects are commonplace, but which give us an insight into the life and conditions of the people of Judæa in the days of Jesus.

We have already done a good deal of this "stripping" process, and—it is hoped the reader will agree—with astonishing results. But much more has to be done before all that which is foreign or false has been removed from the canvass.

We have scraped off the halo-crowned, glorified figure of "Christ," and in its place have uncovered the portrait of a man plainly attired in the modest garb of a Jewish rabbi in the act of addressing—not a howling mob about to lynch him—but a crowd of eager, earnest listeners, many of them already devoted disciples, others impressed by the force of his facts, his arguments, his appeal. His

is not the commanding figure of the *Christ* dressed in royal purple, exhaling visible rays of glory. the real Jesus is also a real man, outwardly not differing from other men. He is humble, unassuming, kind and gentle, yet with an earnestness in his face and a purposefulness in his soulful eyes which make us realize what his contemporaries meant when they said of him that "he baptized not with water, as did John, but *with the holy spirit*." For even at this distant time we can discover in "the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth"—to quote the words of the evangelist—a power which made tyrants tremble with fear.

He is not despised and hated by the multitude which is crowding around him—as in the covering picture—nor is it he who is hiding in fear of his life: it is the "priests and elders" who—whilst the beloved Tribune is addressing enthusiastic crowds in temple or in public places—are deliberating in secret how they might by some subtle means ensnare this idol of the people without causing an uproar.

We thus see how the tale *told* by the evangelists is different from the tale revealed in their narratives. It is bare justice to say that the writers, though biased partisans, were not casuists. They were ignorant and credulous; but they were sincere, and told their tales with the *naïveté* of unsophisticated children, and have thus unwittingly supplied in their accounts the information which enables us to correct their misstatements.

It is not the Gospels which present any real difficulty in the disentangling of the truth; for—notwithstanding their confused and contradictory statements—the facts are staring the student in the face if only he cares to see them, and is not more concerned in the bolstering up of an exploded theory than in finding the truth. The real difficulty the student has to contend with consists in throwing off preconceptions which have been indoctrinated into his mind from his earliest infancy, and in bringing an open, honest, unbiased intention to the study of the subject.

As far as theologians are concerned, this has never

yet been the case—or there would not be now any such problem still requiring solution. Their object had never been to find the truth, but to defend their profession and their *faith*; and when they criticized at all, it was only to attack rival creeds or rival doctrines. The inquirer knew beforehand what conclusions he was going to arrive at, and his task consisted in devising arguments to prove his case, and in finding—or *inventing*—texts in support of his contention—which often he did not believe himself.

If our object is simply to discover the truth about the life of Jesus and his teaching, then our course is clear and comparatively simple. In the first place and as a preliminary to our investigation, we must—as a matter of course—eliminate from the Gospel narratives all that which is recorded to have happened *after the death of Jesus*, as being obviously irrelevant to the subject. Under this heading must come all that which is distinctly Pauline and—a *fortiori*—that which is *post-Pauline*; *since Paul belonged to a later generation*

In this way we get rid at one fell swoop of all that has happened, or is supposed to have happened, after the execution of Jesus.

Whatever were the last words of Jesus on the cross, with them ended his life's history. Subsequent events may be referred to him in so far only as they may have been the result of his acts or teaching during his lifetime. We must brush aside as irrelevant the miracles which are alleged to have happened at the moment when Jesus breathed his last, such as the darkening of the sun, the rending of the curtain in the Temple, the opening of the graves, and the walking about of the dead: miracles which do not seem to have made any impression on those who were living and present at the time, and which remained unknown to Paul—or which, in any case, he did not believe. But let us note in passing that it is these supposed "miracles"—unknown to or unbelieved by Paul—which constitute the only evidence of the alleged "obstinacy of the unbelieving Jews" which made them "reject the Messiah."

We may also brush aside without giving it a moment's consideration the legend relating to the immaculate conception and the virgin birth of Jesus, together with the childish stories about the magi, the piloting star, the slaughter of the innocents, the flight into Egypt, and all other "miracles," without stopping to discuss whether they could have happened or not, since in any case they are irrelevant to our subject. And whilst on the subject of miracles, we may as well dispose of the arguments based on the miraculous once and for all—as far as this present inquiry is concerned.

To the present writer the word "supernatural" has no meaning at all; for all that which happens, or which *can* happen—even though the phenomenon has never before been observed—is part of *Nature*, and is therefore *natural*, even though to man the phenomenon may be *wonderful*. A "miracle," therefore, if it is something that cannot happen according to the "laws" which govern the universe, is not *supernatural*, but *unnatural* or *impossible*.

In any case, the performance of something rare or wonderful can prove nothing more than the skill or knowledge of the performer. In every other respect, such "wonderful" performances—whether real or based on deception—are as much subject to the ordinary laws of evidence as any commonplace event. In the search of truth it is the *probable* rather than that which is merely *possible* that is of any value in formulating a theory; and in any case a conclusion arrived at, on whatever hypothesis, must be verified before its truth can be regarded as established.

On such terms—and on such terms only—may we admit "miracles" as evidence.

We need not waste time, therefore, in discussing what value to attach to Paul's assertion that he had converse with Jesus many years after the latter's death, as we are concerned solely with the *living* Jesus, who had breathed his last many years before it occurred to Paul that "according to the Scriptures" this Jesus must have been "both Lord and Christ."

The point which we have to decide is not whence or how Paul derived his gospel, but whether the doctrines which he promulgated in the name of *Christ* were identical with what *Jesus* taught; or whether he was justified in deducing his doctrines from the utterances of Jesus.

There are two ways of establishing conclusively the innocence of an accused person. One is by showing that according to conditions of time or place he could not possibly have committed the act of which he is accused; and the other by proving that the deed had been perpetrated by someone else, without the possible connivance of the accused.

In the case of the alleged Messiahship of Jesus both these lines of evidence are available in most complete form. The *alibi* of time—in view of the positive assertion of Paul that Jesus was declared to be Son of God “by the resurrection from the dead”—is beyond question. Our witness is Paul himself. He not only says so plainly and positively, but actually bases an *argumentum ad absurdum* on the supposed “fact”—proving the reality of resurrection in general by the supposed resurrection of Jesus (1 Cor. xv. 12–15).

So much for the *alibi*.

Equally conclusive is the admission—nay, the boastful CLAIM of Paul—that the gospel which he preached was his own, and that to him alone among mortals was due all the credit and merit of its publication.

I take it, therefore, as incontestably established that the historical Jesus—as distinct from the mythical Christ—has had no share and could have had no share in the conception or promulgation of his Messiahship as taught by Paul, since neither Paul's gospel nor the doctrine of the Messiahship—still less, of course, the doctrine of *salvation by faith* and other doctrines based thereon—was known or thought of until many years after the death of Jesus.

The only question which remains to be answered therefore is, whether there was anything in the teaching of Jesus which—directly or indirectly—might have led to or justified the theories of Paul.



This question is easily answered, and, indeed, has been answered already in these pages. But the far-reaching importance of the question, as well as the deep-rooted belief in the doctrines of Paul, not only justify, but make it imperatively necessary that the main facts and arguments bearing on this point should here be summarized, even though this may involve repetition of what—in other connections—has already been stated.

There are two leading principles in the theology of Paul, both of which are not only alien to Jesus, but are in direct opposition to his recorded utterances. One of these is that "Christ" has substituted a *new dispensation* for the old covenant. This implies, of course, that Jesus had abrogated the Mosaic law. This, in fact, is Paul's contention, who—whatever were his shortcomings—was always consistently logical. In his Epistle to the Romans in particular he is at great pains to show that *the law* is no longer of any account, and is a curse rather than a help to those seeking salvation.

Now, not only is there no ground whatever in anything that Jesus said or did to justify such a doctrine, but every word of his authentic speeches which have been preserved for us is opposed to any such theory.

In the Sermon on the Mount there is the declaration, "Think not that I have come to destroy the law, or the prophets: *I have not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*"

When challenged by a lawyer to state what he considered to be "the great commandment in the law," Jesus recited the "Hear, O Israel," which is the essence of the "old covenant" and the basic law of Judaism. "This," he said, "is the first and great commandment; but the second is like unto it: Love thy neighbour as thyself." "*On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*" And again, "*There is none greater than these two commandments.*"

When a heckling lawyer asked him what he must do to inherit life eternal, Jesus referred him to *the law*. When the lawyer recited the two commandments, Jesus replied, "Thou sayest right; this do and thou shalt live."

When a disciple of his—"a young ruler"—asked a similar question, Jesus answered, "Obey the law." When asked Which? Jesus recited the decalogue, ending with "and love thy neighbour as thyself."

In the Parable of the Last Judgment the fulfilment of the second commandment, "which is like unto the first," is made the test by which the people are separated "as are sheep from goats," and rewarded accordingly.

Even when denouncing "the scribes and Pharisees," Jesus bespoke respect for their office and obedience to their decrees, "*because they sit in Moses' seat.*" It was rabbinic law and rabbinic traditions which he disregarded, but even these he neither denounced nor forbade: he simply regarded such ceremonial law as "the commandments of men," and as such inessential and immaterial.

But nowhere in the recorded speeches or parables is there any suggestion of abrogating the Mosaic law, or of any intention to substitute a new dispensation for the old covenant. It is in Paul's epistles only that "a new testament" is mentioned for the first time (2 Cor. iii. 6), and that we learn that the people were not to be judged according to "the great commandment in the law," as illustrated by Jesus in his Parable of the Last Judgment, but "according to *my* [i.e. Paul's] gospel."

Next in importance to the Messiahship in Paul's Christology is the "kingdom of heaven," which was to be the reward of those "who believed on the Lord Jesus-Christ." It was the thing hoped for—the cynosure of the "new dispensation," whither the "saints" were to be transferred so as to escape *from the wrath of an offended God.*

Now, Jesus knew no such God who needed to be appeased, nor a place of refuge where people could escape the natural consequences of their misdeeds. As repeatedly explained in these pages, what Jesus sought to establish was the *dominion* of God *here on earth*, and not a "kingdom" in the clouds. A perusal of the parables and exhortations of Jesus leaves no room for doubt as to what he meant by "*kingdom of God*" or

"*kingdom of justice*"; any more than there can be any mistaking the gross materialism of Paul's "*kingdom*" in the clouds.

After all this positive evidence to the contrary, let us give just a passing consideration—for it will require no more—to such passages as Matt. vii. 22-23 or Luke vi. 46, which are cited by commentators as showing "a highly developed Messianic consciousness" on the part of Jesus: e.g. "Why call ye *me*, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which *I* say?"

A "Messianic consciousness" can be read into this passage only if we think that the "*me*" and "*I*" referred to Jesus himself. But if we assume that these words were supposed to have been spoken by "the Father which is in heaven," and as such have merely been *quoted* by Jesus, then the contention that they show "a Messianic consciousness" falls to the ground.

In connection with the Parable of the Last Judgment (Matt. xxv. 40) there occurs a similar passage. "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these (my brethren) ye have done it unto me." Obviously these words might also be cited as showing "a Messianic consciousness" if considered as spoken by Jesus and in reference to himself. But they cannot be so interpreted if it is remembered that it is "the King," i.e. God, who is supposed to have spoken these words, and that Jesus merely "quoted" them.

The words "my brethren" in the above passage constitute a difficulty to such a reading, inasmuch as they imply that the "King" (or God) is referring to men as his "brethren." But the context makes it sufficiently clear that these words have been interpolated by a transcriber who—in the words of Dr. J. E. Carpenter—inserted them "under the potent influence of preconceived interpretation."

Under the same influence, I suggest, some copyist has suppressed some words which ascribed the passages in Matt. vii. 22-23, and Luke vi. 46 to God, and as such have been "quoted" by Jesus. It is on such paltry "evidence" as this that the alleged Messianic claim of

Jesus is based, in face of the overwhelming and positive evidence to the contrary.

There is, as far as I know, only one more "argument" which is supposed to show "a Messianic consciousness" on the part of Jesus, and I deal with it not without a feeling of humiliation that it should be necessary to discuss such a frivolous contention in connection with so serious a subject. I am referring to the alleged prophecy by Jesus of his own resurrection when he said, according to John ii 19-22, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The only comment I will make on this mendacious piece of "evidence" is that only after "he was risen from the dead" did "his disciples *remember* that he had said this unto them"; and then only did it occur to them that "he spake of the temple of his body; . . . and *they believed* the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said."

The reader will thus see that whilst the whole life and teachings of Jesus are a direct negation of the theory of "a new dispensation," there is—as I said before—not a shred of admissible evidence that Jesus himself ever claimed Messiahship, or that anyone else claimed it for him during his lifetime.

And this fact explains the great difficulty with which the problem concerning the life and teachings of Jesus is alleged to be beset. The difficulty consists in proving the Messiahship of Jesus in the absence of any evidence. Yet to prove this is the sole object of Christian apologists and commentators.

## CHAPTER XIX

### PAULINE INFLUENCE ON ANTE-PAULINE HISTORY

THE above heading is paradoxical. But so are the records of events supposed to have happened in Judæa during the lifetime of Jesus, and even prior to it.

It is a fact—paradoxical though it is—that it is impossible to understand Jesus with reference to his own time, or his contemporaries with reference to himself, except by studying the history of a man who lived in a subsequent generation.

In the case of Paul the converse is true of the aphorism that "Events cast their shadows before." Paul has cast his shadow a full generation behind his own time, and has overshadowed—in many respects entirely obliterated—the true history of those days.

If only that shadow had silhouetted the *real* Paul, and projected the *true* history of his time, our present task might be a comparatively easy one. But that was not the case. The history of Paul, of his self-imposed mission, of his relationships to Jesus, to the "apostles," to the Jews and Gentiles; his tactics, his temperament, his psychology, have all been misdescribed, misrepresented, and misinterpreted. And as the history of Paul is the groundwork of what passes current as the history of the period covered by the Christ-legend, we must study the former before we can correct the misconceptions and misstatements concerning the latter.

The fact is that the true history of Jesus or his time has never yet been written—or even attempted. As previously pointed out, the object of the evangelists, and subsequently of their commentators, has not been to write history, but to defend *the faith*; and to do so the needed evidence was not sought for in the pages of

history, but was *inferred* from the theme the truth of which was to be established. The process which was followed in practically every case which presented any difficulty was the familiar logical "roundabout" so peculiar to theology, and may be described as follows: Say that the truth of some extraordinary event required to be proved, then the first step was to invent conditions which might or could have produced it. The next step was to construct a suitable syllogism which would "prove" that nothing else could account for the alleged event. (The truth of the latter is, of course, never questioned, but is taken for granted.) Then from the "undoubted evidence" established in this manner is drawn the "inevitable conclusion" that "thus it *must* have happened."

In this way Paul "proved" the truth of the resurrection by the "fact" that "Christ rose from the dead." The evangelists "proved" the truth of their incredible narratives by an appeal to *post-facto* "prophecies" which "needs must have been fulfilled." And in the same way "history" has been invented by commentators to account for an alleged sudden eruption of "Messianic expectation" among the Jews just prior to the advent of Jesus, of which there is neither record nor evidence, and for which no parallel can be found in Jewish history.<sup>1</sup>

Thus not only has the history of the period been perverted and corrupted, but the character, history, and psychology of all those concerned—John, Jesus, "the Jews," the "scribes and the Pharisees," the "high-priests and elders," the "apostles,"<sup>2</sup> and of Paul himself—have been misrepresented, and the spirit of the times has been misconceived, as a consequence.

<sup>1</sup> Of course the Jews did expect—as they still do—the return of Elijah the prophet, who is believed to have been taken to heaven in a chariot of fire *without having passed through the gates of death*. But there is no record of any such *imminent* expectation of a Messiah or *the* Messiah, or that at any time it was more than a hope and a prayer.

<sup>2</sup> None of the "twelve" was a contemporary of Jesus. They were "appointed" by the *resurrected Christ* "through the Holy Ghost" just prior to his ascension; after having given "commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: *to whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs.*" etc (Acts i 2-3). I cannot now enter more fully into the evidence.

But thanks to the ingenious *naïveté* of the evangelists, it is not necessary to call outside witnesses to prove the untruth of their allegations. As I have already shown, all the evidence required can be obtained from the New Testament writers themselves by subjecting them to a process of cross-examination.

The Jews, no doubt, clung to their Scriptures, as they still do. But it is not true that they were the obstinate infidels, deaf to reason, blind to facts, and inaccessible to new ideas or new doctrines, as they have been described.

To begin with, there were many sects in the Judæa of those days as far apart in doctrine as the Sadducees, who said, "There is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit," and the Pharisees, who "confessed both" (Acts xxiii. 8).

Men of such divergent opinions as these met in synagogue and in council, worshipping and striving together, the Scriptures being their common bond. Subject to, and within the limits of that supreme authority, any doctrine, however contrary to accepted beliefs, could be preached and debated in synagogue, temple, or council chamber. Thus when Paul was brought before "the chief priests and all their council," there were present both Sadducees and Pharisees, and he made his appeal to the latter. "Men and brethren, he cried, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; of *the hope and resurrection of the dead* I am called in question. And when he had so said, there arose dissensions between the Pharisees and the Sadducees . . . and the scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, *let us not fight against God.*"

In other words, Paul said he had a new message to deliver "concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead," and "the scribes that were of the Pharisees' part" decided that he should be heard, "lest they fought against God."

But surely this betokens an entirely different spirit from the one ascribed to "the scribes and Pharisees" in the Gospels,

Another sect which deviated from commonly accepted notions were the Essenes—the “peculiar people” of those days—who “had all things in common,” and in their whole mode of life and religious observances differed from all the other sects. Yet “they had no particular city to themselves, but lived scattered in all cities” (Josephus) among their fellow-Jews who did not share their views or their mode of life.

All these sects lived side by side as members of *the same race and the same religion*, worshipping in the same synagogues, sacrificing in the same Temple, believing in the same Scriptures, and—*subject to their divergent interpretations*—obeying the same law, the THORA.

Within that law new interpretations of Scripture passages, or new themes for discussion, were not only tolerated, but were welcomed; and Paul was free to propound his new doctrines in any of the synagogues, or in the Temple of Jerusalem—as in fact he did—so long as he did so *from the Scriptures*. But, of course, he had to meet strong counter-proofs and arguments—*also from the Scriptures*.

I will quote a few passages from Acts which throw an entirely new light on the character and mentality of both Paul and “the Jews” whom he failed to convert to his gospel.

In Thessalonica, “where was a synagogue of the Jews, Paul, as *his manner was*, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them *out of the Scriptures*, opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, *is Christ*” (Acts xvii. 1-3). So that Paul was listened to *for three sabbath days*, “and some of them believed”; but the majority of Jews, it seems, “believed not.”

It is noteworthy that not only did the Jews allow Paul to preach such revolutionary doctrine in their synagogues, but *Greeks* were freely admitted to these discussions, as appears from such passages as this—“and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few,” believed and “consorted with Paul and Silas.”



(What a contrast this is between the tolerance of Jews and Greeks of those ante-Christian times, as compared with the reciprocal hatred between Jew and Christian of to-day! We shall see further on that there is a direct causal connection between the "gospel" of Paul and this change from toleration to hatred.)

Paul was not very successful among the Jews of Thessalonica. But in Berea they "were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with readiness of mind, *and searched the Scriptures daily* whether those things were so" (ibid. 10-11).

The doctrine of *faith*, of blind acceptance of a new dispensation which—as Paul himself contended later—involved the abrogation of all law, had then not yet been advanced. Paul still argued "from the Scriptures"; and he received a ready hearing wherever he desired to speak.

In Corinth he "reasoned in the synagogue *every sabbath*, and persuaded the Jews and the *Greeks* [sic!], and testified to the Jews *that Jesus was Christ*" (xviii. 2-4).

In Ephesus "he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly *for the space of three months*" (xix. 8). In Iconium both Paul and Barnabas went "into the synagogues of the Jews, and so spake that a great multitude both of the Jews *and also of the Greeks* believed (xiv. 1).

In Rome, whither he was brought as a prisoner, "Paul called the chief of the Jews together," to whom he then explained what brought him to Rome. "And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judæa concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came showed or spake any harm of thee. But *we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest*; for concerning this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against" (xxviii. 17-22). And notwithstanding—nay, rather *because of*—this unfavourable report they desired to hear him. "And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging, to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, *both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets*, from morning till evening; and some believed

the things which were spoken, and some believed not " (23-4).

From north to south, from east to west, all over the then known world, wherever there were Jews, Paul was welcomed, and in their synagogues was allowed to expound his doctrine that Jesus was Christ—not to Jews only, but also to Greeks—so long as he did so from the Scriptures. Everywhere he was listened to and argued with—in some places for months at a stretch—and "some believed" and "some believed not."

On the whole, his success among the Jews was disappointing. He relied on Scripture passages which to himself seemed conclusive, and was chagrined when he found that the passages cited by him admitted of different interpretations, whilst other passages were entirely against him.

Evidently Paul was unable to meet their objections, for in the end he had to abandon the Scriptures—both the law of Moses and the prophets—and to declare all law as obsolete and defunct. Not being able to meet argument with argument, and the Jews not willing to accept on his bare unsupported statement a theory which meant the revocation of the *Thora* on which was based their religion, their philosophy, their laws and institutions, their very existence as a nation, Paul lost his patience. Instead of persuading and arguing, "as his manner was," he began to reprove and to threaten. In anger he exclaimed:—

Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand: and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: for the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed, lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them (Acts xxviii 25-7).

Judging by the evidence before us by one who—according to the unanimous opinion of scholars—was a companion of Paul, and therefore wrote from personal knowledge, Paul had no just reason for this angry outburst. For according to this witness the Jews "received

the word with readiness of mind"; and as Paul referred them to the Scriptures for evidence, "*they searched the Scriptures daily* whether those things were so."

But they found that "those things" were *not* so.

And so at Corinth, when the Jews "opposed themselves and blasphemed" [sic!], he shook his raiment, and said unto them, "Your blood be on your heads; I am clean: *from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles*" (Acts xviii. 6).

It is thus that Paul became "an apostle of the Gentiles," driven to it by *chagrin*, and not by "*the grace of God*"

Paul, who, in his own words, was "a Pharisee and the son of a Pharisee" . . . "*more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers*" than the rest of his nation; who persecuted and dragged before the priestly tribunals the disciples of Jesus the Tribune, shook the dust of Judaism off his feet, abrogated "both the law of Moses and the prophets," and went *among the heathen*.

And just as he was "more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of his fathers" whilst still acknowledging the law of Moses, so he was *exceedingly zealous* in preaching *his own gospel* among the "heathen": he became an *iconoclast*. The law he declared to have become a curse. Christ—*his Christ*—"hath redeemed us from the curse of the law." Henceforth "by the deeds of law no flesh shall be justified"; but "God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to *my gospel*."

Paul's gospel was to be supreme. It had to be accepted on *faith*. There was to be no discussion about it *from the Scriptures*. Paul, "more exceedingly zealous than any other of his nation," would brook no doubt or questioning of his decrees. The Scriptures were against him, so the Scriptures must go. They were of no use to him among the Jews, and a stumbling-block among the "heathen." To them he "certified" (Gal. i. 11) that "the gospel which was preached of me is not after man :

<sup>1</sup> Surely it is safe to assume that the Jews must have thought the same of Paul, who asked them to accept a doctrine which, according to his own contention, involved the abrogation of the law in which "they lived and moved and had their being."

for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but *by the revelation of Jesus Christ*”—whom he never met.

*Therefore—*

Though we, *or an angel from heaven*, preach any other gospel unto you than that which *we have preached unto you*, let him be accursed ;

and to give due emphasis to the dictum, he repeated :—

As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed

Thus did Paul sow, *not* seeds of love, peace, and goodwill, but the dragons' teeth of hatred and discord. Up till then *Jews* and *Greeks* met in “the synagogues of the Jews” listening to Paul, “*receiving the word with readiness of mind, and searching the Scriptures daily* whether those things were so” (Acts xvii. 11) But Paul put an end to such friendly intercourse. He separated not only “Jews” and “Greeks,” but Jews from Jews and Greeks from Greeks, according as they were “believers” or “unbelievers” in *the gospel of Paul*, the truth of which he could *not* establish “from the Scriptures.” To-day, not only can Jew and Christian no longer meet in the same house of God, “searching the Scriptures whether those things were so”; but Christian is forbidden to meet Christian in the same church, unless both believe exactly the same thing. They are separated by the curse of Paul, which forbids inquiry.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE PAULINE SHADOW

IN the fourth Gospel we read —

After these things Jesus walked in Galilee . for he would not walk in Jewry, *because the Jews sought to kill him* (vii. 1)

In a subsequent chapter the same Gospel describes the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem as being the occasion of great rejoicings, the people going forth to meet him waving branches of palm-trees, crying “Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.” The four evangelists—as we have seen in the preceding chapter—are vying with each other in their accounts of the enthusiasm manifested by the thronging multitude which came to welcome him.

Yet the evangelist, in the part just quoted, goes on to say that—

when his brethren were gone up to Jerusalem, then went he [Jesus] also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret.

The account further says :—

Then the Jews sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he ? And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him : for some said, He is a good man , and some said, Nay, but he deceiveth the people (ibid. 10-12)

These statements are in glaring contrast with the account of the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, and the enthusiasm with which—according to the unanimous accounts of the four evangelists—he was received by the people throughout his career. When he was

expected to preach in Temple or synagogue, the place was crowded, the people coming "early in the morning." People came from distant cities to hear him, and "multitudes" followed him from place to place. More especially must we reject the statements that "he would not walk in Jewry for fear of the Jews"; for Jewry and Jerusalem were the centres of his activity.

It was in Jerusalem where he addressed enthusiastic crowds, whither people from all parts of the country flocked to hear him, and where he was finally arrested. And he certainly did not go up to Jerusalem "as it were in secret," nor teach there secretly. "I spake openly to the world," Jesus is reported to have said to the high-priest after his arrest; "*I ever taught in the synagogue and in the Temple . . . and in secret have I said nothing.*" And there is certainly nothing in his teaching to make us doubt the truth of these words, for he taught nothing which could offend Jewish ears, Jewish sentiments, Jewish prejudices, or Jewish piety.

We cannot accept, therefore, the allegation that Jesus was afraid to walk in Jewry, or that he went up to the feast in Jerusalem secretly, or that the Jews sought to kill him.

But if we substitute the name of *Paul* for that of *Jesus* in the passages quoted, the statements may be accepted as historically true. For it was *Paul*—as we shall presently learn from the evidence of one who claims to have been an eye-witness of the things he wrote about—who "would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him"; and "when his brethren were gone up" to Jerusalem, *Paul* "went also up unto the feast, *not openly, but as it were in secret.*" And it was *Paul*, and not *Jesus*, whom "the Jews sought at the feast, and said, Where is he?" And it was *Paul* concerning whom "there was much murmuring among the people: for some said, He is a good man; and some said, *Nay, but he deceiveth the people.*"

These records in the Gospel of John are SHADOWS OF PAUL CAST BACK INTO THE ANTE-PAULINE PERIOD.

All along the picture in the Gospels which purports to illustrate the hatred of the Jews for Jesus is *the shadow*

*of events of a subsequent generation*, in which *Paul* is the central figure and the object of the persecutions. Here is the tale itself, the shadow of which has deceived the evangelists.

Paul and his company were at Cæsarea (Acts xxi. 8 ff.) when "there came down from Judæa a certain prophet named Agabus," who warned Paul against venturing to go up to Jerusalem.—

And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered . . . I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

(Compare with this account the statement in the Gospel of John that "when his brethren were gone up, then went he [*Jesus*] also up unto the feast, *not openly, but as it were secretly*.'')

And there went with us . . . one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge. And when we were come to Jerusalem, *the brethren* received us gladly. And the day following Paul went in with us unto James, and all the elders were present. And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.

For this he was commended. But they rebuked him severely, though in kindly language, for speaking against the law of Moses, and imposed upon him a severe penance for his transgression before he could be readmitted to the fold.

Thou seest, brother [they said to him,] how many *thousands of Jews there are which believe*; and they are all zealous of the law: and they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles *to forsake Moses*, saying they need not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: *for they will hear that thou art come*.

The narrative—which the reader should read for himself—implies that if his presence became known, there would be a riot against the blasphemer, which might endanger his life:—

Do therefore this that we say to thee. We have four men which have a vow on them, them take, and *purify thyself* with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing, but that *thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law*. Then Paul took the men, and the next day, purifying himself with them, entered into the Temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them. And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the Temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, crying out, *Men of Israel, help: this is the man that teacheth all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place*: and further brought Greeks also into the Temple, and hath polluted this holy place. And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the Temple, and forthwith the doors were shut. And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul. Then the chief captain came near, and took him and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done. And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude: and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle. And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people. For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him! And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? . . . I beseech thee suffer me to speak unto the people. And when he had given him licence, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue.

Then Paul told the people of his conversion; how Jesus appeared to him in a trance when he travelled to Damascus:—

And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, *even while I prayed in the Temple*, I was in a trance; and saw *him* [Christ] saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem, for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.

This is how Paul explained on that occasion why he left Jerusalem and fled into Galilee and walked among the Gentiles. The same author who records this gave another—and a more probable—reason in an earlier chapter (xviii. 6), already quoted. There he says that when the Jews opposed him, Paul “shook his raiment and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads . . . *from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.*”



The Jews, many thousands of whom "believed," were not impressed by his defence :—

They gave him audience unto his word, and then lifted up their voices and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth : for it is not fit that he should live

These words, and the scene depicted, are strongly reminiscent of what is recorded to have happened in the court of Pontius Pilate, when the infuriated people are reported to have clamoured for the death of Jesus. The suggestion I make is that the alleged persecutions of Jesus by the *people* are echoes of the persecutions of Paul.

Other texts might be quoted from the Gospels which, by comparison with parallel texts in Acts, could be shown to refer to incidents in the life of Paul, but which the evangelists have ascribed to Jesus. For one thing, the name of Paul is not so much as mentioned in the Gospels, although they must have been written many years after the death of Paul. But to enter into these side-issues would involve writing a commentary on the whole of the New Testament writings ; and that, of course, is beyond the scope of the present essay.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE APOSTLES AND "THEY WHO BELIEVED"

THE account of the doings of Paul quoted in the last chapter, recorded by one who impliedly has had personal knowledge of the things he wrote about, enables us now to write reliable history concerning matters which till now—quite unaccountably—have remained obscure and wrapt in mystery.

To begin with, we can state it now with confidence that the history of "the Lord Jesus-Christ" does not begin with the genealogy of Jesus, as in the first Gospel; nor with the prophecy, "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face," as in the Gospel ascribed to Mark; nor with the history of Zacharias and Elisabeth, as in the Gospel of Luke; nor yet with the *Logos*, as in the fourth Gospel; but with the incident when—chagrined by his failure to convince the Jews that "according to the Scriptures" Jesus was Christ—Paul "*shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own head; I am clean; from henceforth I GO UNTO THE GENTILES.*"

And he went to the Gentiles, only to meet there with new obstacles put in his way by *the Scriptures*. For in those days, before a Gentile could join "the brethren"—that is, "those who believed"—*he had to become a Jew and obey the law of Moses.*

But the Gentiles did not take kindly to some of the Jewish rites. Circumcision in particular proved a great stumbling-block, and Paul began to realize what the Jews, in another way, also tried to prove to him, that *the Scriptures were against him*, and that either he would have to abandon his own pet theory or free himself from *the trammels of the law*. The two were obviously incompatible from every point of view.

And so Paul began to speak against the law, contending that circumcision and ordinances as to food were not essentials and might be dispensed with.

Had Paul confined himself to making such concessions to Gentiles merely, he would probably have met with but little opposition<sup>1</sup>. At most the stricter members of the sect might have objected to admit such half-converts into full Jewish fellowship. But Paul went much further, and in his zeal to assure the Gentiles that they were on an equality with those who were circumcised, "he taught all the Jews which were among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs."

So long as Paul confined himself to proving *from the Scriptures* that Jesus was Christ, he not only was left unmolested by the Jews, but was eagerly listened to, and "*they searched the Scriptures daily whether those things were so.*"

But when he began "to forsake Moses," the Jews drove him out of their synagogues, persecuted and waylaid him, and on more than one occasion Paul narrowly escaped being lynched by his outraged compatriots<sup>2</sup>.

After these things *Paul*—and *not Jesus*, as reported by John (vii. 1)—"walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him."

And when he went up secretly to Jerusalem to justify himself before "the brethren" by his successes among the Gentiles, "James and all the elders" ordered him to *purify* himself, whereas "the many thousands of Jews which believed," when they discovered his presence in Jerusalem, laid hands on him . . . and all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul and drew him out of the Temple," and would have killed him but for the timely intervention of the soldiers.

Instead of the alleged epidemic of "Messianic expectations" which is supposed to have raged in Judæa prior

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Acts xv. 5 ff, xxi. 25, etc

<sup>2</sup> He did not fare much better among the Greeks. They, too, were willing to listen to the new doctrine. But when Paul began to blaspheme their gods, the people revolted, and would have killed him but for the interference of the authorities. See Acts xvii. 17 ff.

to the advent of John the Baptist and of Jesus, we learn now that a full generation after the death of Jesus the Jews tried to kill the man who declared Jesus to have been Christ—not, indeed, because of that doctrine, *but because he taught that that doctrine involved the abrogation of the law of Moses.*

And among the men who sought to kill him were "Jews which believed," but who nevertheless were all of them "zealous of the law."

Evidently it was not inconsistent, therefore, for a Jew to remain *under the law* and yet to be a disciple of Jesus ; for here we have the followers of Jesus, *presided over by the twelve apostles*, not only obeying the law of Moses, but trying to kill Paul for teaching them to disregard it

At the time we are speaking of Jesus had been dead for at least a full generation, and his disciples, including the twelve apostles, were still Jews and zealous of the law, knowing nothing about *a new dispensation* and insisting on the due observance of the old covenant, even to the traditional customs. The gospel of "salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus-Christ," which Jesus is alleged to have commanded the twelve apostles to preach to all the world, had at that time not yet taken form in Paul's mind. He himself was still a Jew and still under the law of Moses, as we have seen. For he was ordered to do penance for having transgressed the law ; and he submitted to the prescribed process of purification. And even when, under the protection of the soldiers, he addressed the Jews for the last time (Acts xxii. 1-22) from the precincts of the castle, he still protested his Jewish faith, referring them to "one Ananias, *a devout man according to the law*, having a good report of *all the Jews* which dwelt there," etc.

The Jews "gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, *Away with such a fellow from the earth : for it is not fit that he should live.*"

It is thus that Paul was "separated unto the Gentiles." And this is the true beginning of the story of "the Lord Jesus-Christ" according to the gospel of Paul.

And now a few words about *those Jews* who thus drove Paul out of Jerusalem and out of Judæa.

Who were they? Many thousands of them were *the followers of Jesus*, the "brethren" of the sect which Paul at first persecuted and later became a convert to. They constituted "the Church at Jerusalem" presided over by "the apostles and elders." They were the people referred to in current history as "*the apostles and early Christians*"—although as yet there was no Christ, and there were no *Christians* in existence.

They were a Jewish sect, known as the Nazarenes, whose members belonged to all classes of Jewish society, and all of whom "were zealous of the law": that is, they were strict Jews. They would not have been tolerated in Jerusalem, or allowed to enter the Temple, had it been otherwise. They were one sect among many others, all of whom regarded the law of Moses as supreme and inviolable, although they differed in their *interpretations* of isolated passages. They all worshipped in the same Temple, were subject to the same law, the same traditions, and the same customs. In short, they were all of them *Jews*, both in race and religion, yet holding divergent opinions in matters of philosophy—so long as these did not conflict with the law.

It was in the Temple and in the synagogues that Jesus taught; that Paul argued with the Jews; and it was in the Temple that Paul did his penance.

Far from forsaking Moses, those "early Christians" were great sticklers for the law; as the following incident will illustrate.—

Certain men which came down from Judæa taught the brethren and said, *Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved* (Acts xv. 1).

When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto *the apostles and elders* about this question . . . And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of *the church*, and of *the apostles and elders*, and they declared all things that God had done with them. But there arose up certain of *the sect of the Pharisees which believed*, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to *keep the law of Moses* " (ibid. 2-5).

The question at issue, be it observed, was not whether a Jew might disregard the law, but whether *Gentiles* had to comply with it before they could be admitted to membership of "the church."

In the end it was decided that certain concessions should be made to Gentiles, relieving them from the necessity of complying with certain requirements of the law. But that no longer interests us. The point which concerns us at present is that among the "apostles and elders of the church" there was no question of forsaking the law of Moses, or of substituting a "new dispensation" for the old covenant, and that there were Pharisees among their numbers. In the Gospels, Jesus is reported to have commanded the apostles to go into all the world and preach *the gospel*.

What was that gospel?

It certainly could not have been the gospel of Paul, which, many years after the death of Jesus, was still unknown to Paul himself, and which postulated the abrogation of the law as a necessity.

The "early Christians"—as we have seen—knew nothing of such a necessity, but drove Paul out of Jerusalem as a man "not fit to live on the earth" when he made his first attack on the law.

Had Jesus himself abrogated the law—and Paul insisted in later years that "Christ was the end of all law"—he would not have been popular with the people of Judæa, as we have seen he was. He would not have been allowed to preach "openly in Temple and in synagogue" as he is reported to have done; and Paul would not have been allowed to argue in the synagogues of the Jews that "this Jesus whom the Jews have crucified is Christ," had Jesus been guilty of the one sin which *in a Jew* is never forgiven by Jews. His name would then have been execrated, as has been the name of "Christ" ever since Paul proclaimed him to be "the end of all law." And lastly, had discipleship to Jesus implied ever so remotely a disregard or disrespect of the law of Moses, the "church" with its "apostles" and "elders" would not have been tolerated in Jerusalem.

To sum up the results of this and the preceding chapter : the followers of Jesus—the “early Christians,” according to common belief—were about to kill *the founder of Christianity*, before he himself was a “Christian,” and before he had evolved his “new dispensation.”

Surely this is not a *progression* of history, but a *retrogression* ; a “reading back” into the mind of previous generations a gospel which in their days had no existence, and which even in the mind of its author had not taken form until after he had been cast adrift by those who are alleged to have believed and taught that gospel

Then what did the “apostles” and “brethren”—the true followers of Jesus—believe and teach ?

They *believed* in the law of Moses, the basic doctrine of which is “the first and great commandment”—acknowledged by *all Jews*, whatever sect they may belong to. They also *believed* what Jesus taught, and *what other sects did not necessarily agree with*, that the second law, Love thy neighbour as thyself, *was like unto the first*.

And they *taught* that “on these two commandments hung all the law and the prophets.”

A specimen of their teaching has been preserved for us in the Epistle of “James, a servant of God,” addressed to “the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad.” The word “Christ” occurs twice in the epistle (ch. i. 1 and ch. ii. 1) ; but in each case is an obvious interpolation. If we eliminate the words “and of the Lord Jesus Christ” from the one, and “of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory” from the second of the indicated passages, we have an exhortation which, in spirit and in detail, agrees with the teachings of Jesus, but is the antithesis of the doctrines of Paul. The reader can make the comparison for himself. A few verses only may find here a place as showing in what respects they differed from “the scribes and Pharisees who sat in Moses’ seat,” and from the later gospel of Paul.

But be ye *doers* of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves (i. 22).

But whoso looketh into *the perfect law of liberty*, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, *but a doer of the work*, this man shall be *blessed in his deed* (v. 28)

But ye have despised the poor *Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seat ?* (ii 6).

If you fulfil the royal law *according to the Scripture*, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well ; but if ye have respect for persons, ye commit sin, and are convicted of the law as transgressors (ii 8-9)

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works ? Can faith save him ? *If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say to them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit ?* Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone . . . Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works (ibid. 14-18).

Verse by verse and point by point, the Epistle of James is an exposition of the principles taught by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount and in the various parables. Equally manifest is it that every point insisted on in this epistle is the direct antithesis of the teachings of Paul. The outstanding feature is this : *Not only did the tenets of the sect to which the twelve apostles belonged not require the abrogation of the Mosaic law, but necessitated its observance ;* whereas Paul taught that " Christ was the end of all law."

From the information supplied by Acts and contained in the epistles of Paul, an exact history could be written of the evolution in Paul's mind of his scheme of " salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus-Christ." But it would entail the writing of an extensive commentary to dispel and disprove the false interpretations which commentators have deliberately read into these documents.



## CHAPTER XXII

“ ECCE HOMO ”

**Men of Israel, *This is the Man* that teacheth all men everywhere against the people and the law, and has polluted this holy place.**

THUS cried the “ many thousands of Jews which believed,” all of whom were “ zealous of the law.”

*And that man was* PAUL.

This is the man—and *not* Jesus—who forsook Moses ; who abrogated the law ; who declared as of none effect “ the two great commandments ” on which Jesus said hung “ all the law and the prophets ” ; who substituted “ a new dispensation ” for the old covenant ; who imposed an entirely new gospel on mankind ; and who cursed in advance everybody who dared doubt or question his dicta.

Men of Israel—and also *Men of Christendom*—this is the man who has sown the dragons’ teeth of discord, hatred, and intolerance ; who has poisoned the springs of life and religion ; who “ persuaded men to worship God contrary to law ” (Acts xviii. 13) ; who substituted for the loving Father who is kind “ even to the unthankful and the evil ” a wrathful God who had to be appeased by a blood sacrifice. *This is the man* who proscribed the gospel of love, peace, and justice, and substituted for it a cult of intolerance, hatred, and fratricidal wars.

It was not “ the Jews ” who were stiffnecked and gross of heart. Paul could not complain that they did not give him a fair hearing. *They actually invited him* to expound his new doctrine. They wanted to hear him “ if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him—*lest they fought against God* ” (Acts xxiii. 9).

And they not only listened to him, but “ searched the Scriptures daily, if these things were so.”

They thought “it was not so,” and in the end Paul came to the same conclusion ; for he found himself that “the old covenant ” and “the new dispensation ” were incompatible. Yet it was *he* who said of the Jews that they were gross of heart, blind to facts and deaf to reason, when the only obstinate and *unbelieving Jew* in those assemblies was Paul himself.

Up to the time when, in an outburst of anger, Paul cast off his Judaism, and with it Jewish law and Jewish customs, *Jews* and *Greeks* could meet in the same synagogue and discuss problems which affected the foundations of their several beliefs—even to the question whether there was a resurrection and whether Jesus actually rose from the dead. But from that time forward *Jews* and *Christians* hated, despised, and execrated each other. They could no longer meet for worship in the same *House of God*. To-day not even Christian and Christian can do so, if they happen to belong to different sects. They commenced to quarrel, to hate, and to persecute each other from the moment that Paul sealed his “new dispensation ” with his curse of intolerance.

His gospel, thus begotten in anger, founded on deliberate untruth, and established by a curse, has produced fruit after its own kind. “*For the tree is known by its fruit.*”

These are not imputations of mine, but are accusations brought against him by “those who believed ” ; as told in the “holy writ ” of the New Testament ; every item of which is endorsed by admissions made by Paul himself in his several epistles.

Men of Israel, it is not Jesus who has forsaken Moses, or who has brought contumely and tribulation on the Jews. It is PAUL, who is the author of all the mischief, whom the Jews hated and persecuted, of whom “those who believed ” said that he was “a deceiver of the people ” and “not fit that he should live ” (Acts xxii. 22).

It is Paul, and not Jesus, who is responsible for the persecutions—not of Jews only, but of *Christians* by *Christians*.

*It is Paul's gospel, and not the Sermon on the Mount*

or the *Parable of the Last Judgment* which prevents people of different beliefs from worshipping the same God in the same house of prayer, as they did of yore.

The men of Israel and the men of Christendom are both labouring under the same error of confounding the Sage of Nazareth with the mongrel "Christ" of Paul.

THIS IS THE RELIGION OF JESUS AS DECLARED BY HIMSELF :—

**Hear, O Israel ; the Lord is our God ; the Lord is one : and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength ; and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other greater than these two commandments.**

Surely Jew and Christian could recite this creed standing side by side in the same House of Prayer—even though their beliefs on debatable matters were as far apart as were those of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, the Essenes and the Nazarenes.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE PROPAGANDA OF JESUS

AFTER this lengthy but necessary digression into the history of a later generation, we will now return to the subject with which this book is more particularly concerned.

We have traced the life of Jesus up to the time when, after his meditations, he began expounding his *new interpretation of the ancient law*. For this was the extent of his innovation.

There was no question of abrogating or superseding the law of Moses. Had Jesus attempted anything of the kind, there would have been no need to employ Roman soldiery to arrest and execute him. The people would have done so themselves—not only without help from the imperial authorities, but in spite of them.

And whilst dwelling on this particular theme, it is of interest to note that whilst Jesus was loved and revered by the *people* and hated by the *priestly rulers*, the reverse happened in the case of Paul. He was hated, detested, and persecuted by the *people*, and protected by the imperial authorities.

And what was the attitude of the “high-priests and elders” towards this renegade? At best—or worst—it was one of unconcern. They do not seem to have been shocked by his transgression of the law, or alarmed by the far-reaching cosmic upheavals which he contemplated. Yet he proposed to annihilate earth and heaven, blot out sun and moon, and revolutionize the government of heaven. But he did not interfere in worldly matters, and did not embarrass the temporal authorities as did Jesus. Instead of warning the people not to tolerate any rulers to lord it over them, Paul exhorted slaves

"to be obedient to their masters according to the flesh *as unto Christ.*"<sup>1</sup> It was their souls only he provided for, and that in a *future world*.

This goes far to show the unconcern of the priesthood and of the secular powers in matters affecting "another world" or a "life after death," so long as their power in the land of the living was left unchallenged. Paul was left unmolested because, though he threatened to change the course of nature, he respected what to-day we understand by "Church" and "State."

It was otherwise with Jesus. He found no fault with the universe or with its government, and accepted "the first and great commandment" as the basis of all law. But he tacked on to it its corollary, "Love thy neighbour as thyself"; and from these two commandments he drew some very revolutionary conclusions.

Thus interpreted, the law, as it was administered by "those who sat in Moses' seat," was a dead letter. They preached it, but did not carry it out. They fastened heavy burdens on the shoulders of others, but would not move them with one of their fingers. They made broad their phylacteries, occupied the uppermost seats in temple and at feasts, and loved to be greeted in public places and to be called Rabbi.

Such was the indictment made by Jesus against the rulers of Judæa; and it would only require to be transcribed into modern phraseology to bring it into line with the complaints of the discontented masses of any country of to-day. Surely there is no need to invent far-fetched, improbable theories, or to assume the intervention of supernatural agencies, to explain the events which agitated the people of Judæa of nineteen centuries ago. The same causes which called forth the prophets, ancient and modern—from Isaiah to Tolstoi, Mazzini, or Liebknecht—sufficiently account for the advent of both John and Jesus. And the attitude of Jesus sufficiently explains

<sup>1</sup> Eph. vi. 5; Col. iii. 22; 1 Tim. vi. 1; Titus ii. 9; Philemon 10 ff. The word "servant" is an incorrect rendering of the Greek word *doulos*. The R.V. admits in a marginal note that the word should be rendered

why he was loved by the masses and hated by the ruling priesthood.

Jesus did not threaten the destruction of the universe : he menaced the *temporal powers* by teaching the people " One is your master, the Father which is in heaven, *and all ye are brethren.*"

To propose reforms in another world is one thing ; to advocate reforms in this life is another. The high-priests and elders of the people became alarmed, because Jesus " perverted the nation " (Luke xxiii. 2), and they were unable to meet him in argument or to arrest his rapidly growing influence.

The great crime of Jesus was that he was unanswerable. He attacked neither the Roman nor the Jewish State, and did not interfere with ceremonials or customs.

He did not advocate any concrete measures, political or social, but taught *principles*. Every one of his precepts or injunctions embodied a principle which was self-evident as soon as stated. And this was the great secret of his power.

" The tree is known by his fruit." If, therefore, the fruit is evil, this shows that the tree is corrupt. The only remedy is to uproot such a tree and cast it into the fire.

By such homely, familiar illustrations, which appealed to the understanding of the unsophisticated peasant no less than to the reflecting mind of the more intelligent members of the nation, he created a new atmosphere which alarmed those in power.

Jesus is considered to have been a dreamer, an idealist, who preached abstract ethical principles which sound well, but which are inapplicable to the practical affairs of man. But this estimate of the value of his teaching is based on the grave fallacy that human conduct is independent of " law " or " principle," and dependent entirely on the caprice of man. This, however, is not so. Cause and effect are as closely related in social as in physical phenomena. Slowly only is it brought home to our philosophers that the phenomena of life, of mind, and of social relationships are as much the result of cause and

effect as are physical phenomena ; and one by one are emerging the various "sciences" dealing with mental, moral, and sociological subjects.

The precepts of Jesus are self-evident truths because every one of them is based on the universal experience of man. And they are regarded as "ideal" (in the sense of being inapplicable in practice) because it is not recognized that definite *principles* are underlying social relationships as they are underlying any other group or class of phenomena.

It is the recognition of this fact which distinguishes Jesus from every other reformer—ancient or modern. He did not advocate any political measures, but principles. He did not discriminate between good or bad kings, good or bad forms of government, but denounced all power of man over man as an infraction of the Fatherhood of God—which is bound to have evil results. Peace and goodwill are impossible where man can exercise power over man ; and justice is possible only where people respect in others the rights which they claim for themselves.

Few people, I surmise, would consent to speak of the teachings of Jesus as a "philosophy." Yet if ever any system of reasoned thought deserved this ambitious appellation, it is the much-despised but little understood system of ethics taught by the Nazarene Sage.

I need say little now about this philosophy, since it is to be subjected to a critical examination in a series of chapters which are to follow. Here I will only remark that the power of Jesus was due to his possession of such a complete philosophy, based not on abstract postulates *invented* by man, but on the universal experience of mankind—the *facts of life* which the Great Seer has generalized and formulated into precepts or *rules of conduct*.

*And therein lay the secret of his power.* It was the possession of this knowledge of *principle* which enabled him to state his case in a manner which was not only convincing, but incontrovertible.

It was this fact which made the rulers of Judæa fear him ; which has made tyrants tremble ever since ; which explains why the translation of the New Testament was

so strenuously opposed, and why its interpretation was for so long reserved as the exclusive privilege of a licensed priesthood. This fact will also explain the many fraudulent translations—I am making this accusation gravely and deliberately—of those passages in the reported speeches of Jesus in which he condemns unreservedly a system bolstered up by a priesthood which professes to teach the gospel of Jesus.

Jesus was—and still is—a menace to “the kingdom of man,” and as unanswerable then as he is to-day. It was this circumstance which made it so difficult for the corrupt priests to lay hold of him—in a metaphorical sense, that is; for there could have been no difficulty in laying hold of his person. For, as he is reported to have said when at last the alien soldiers came to arrest him, “Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you in the Temple, and ye laid no hold on me” (Matt. xxvi. 55).

The real difficulty the priests had in laying hold of Jesus was not overcome even after his arrest, for they were at a loss what to accuse him of. In the end the priests had their way by the usual process known as “expediency”; which always means a sacrifice of truth and justice to class interests. The “State” came to the assistance of the “Church.” No matter that the former was an alien power, often in conflict with the latter: “State” and “Church,” or “Church” and “State” always supported each other, when either of them was menaced.



## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE ARREST, TRIAL, AND CRUCIFIXION

JESUS was arrested, tried, condemned, and crucified.

This much we are bound to accept as true. As to details of arrest or trial, there is much room for speculation.

We are bound to admit, however, the crucifixion of Jesus, because Paul spoke of it to the Jews in their synagogues.

We are bound to accept the tradition that he was brought to this shameful end by the connivance of the Jewish priesthood, because Paul was allowed to say so without any of the Jews objecting. And this latter fact is evidence that the people, as a nation, did not approve of his execution; on which point, as we have seen, the evidence is overwhelming.

But why, it will be asked, did the people, who idolized Jesus, permit his execution? The answer to this question is given by the numberless examples supplied by history how such would-be reformers are got rid of.

The priests employed Roman soldiers "armed with swords and staves" to arrest him. There was no *legal* necessity for this. They could have arrested him without either sanction or help from the imperial authorities. They could even have tried him on a capital charge and condemned him to die; and in the latter case only would there have been a necessity for obtaining confirmation of the sentence by the Roman procurator. The employment of armed soldiery, therefore, to effect his arrest is evidence of the far-reaching measures which the priests took to suppress an agitation which had grown to become a "public danger."

There are many rumours in the Gospels as to what happened during and after the crucifixion—some of them

obviously untrue, others that have the semblance of truth, and yet others which it seems safe to regard as history.

We may safely reject as apocryphal the alleged avowal of Jesus to Caiaphas, and later to Pilate, that he was Christ

Nor can we credit the story in Luke's Gospel that Jesus lamented his own fate, when on his way to Calvary, in these words.—

Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me. but weep for yourselves and for your children. . . . For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry ?

Nevertheless, some such words might probably have been spoken, but by the daughters of Jerusalem themselves. For "there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him."

Special mention is made of "one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus" (Luke xxiii. 26). This seemingly trivial incident is mentioned by three of the evangelists in a peculiar way, to the effect that he happened "to pass by"—accidentally, as it were—and that they "compelled" him to carry the cross to which Jesus was to be nailed. No reason is given why just this man Simon "who passed by" should be singled out and be "compelled" to carry the cross, except the information supplied by Mark (xv. 21) that he was "the father of Alexander and Rufus." This seems to afford an explanation, and to throw some side-light on the spirit which prevailed among the chief participants of the procession. Alexander and Rufus were probably friends and active disciples of Jesus who fled. The father, anxious about his sons, probably "came out of the country" and passed by outside the palace of Pilate, expecting to see his sons among the followers of Jesus, perhaps even sharing his fate. He was recognized and laid hold of. But not having been guilty himself of any overt support of Jesus, his only crime being that he was father to Alexander and Rufus, two notorious disciples, "they compelled him to carry the cross," as a warning to others,

For the priests now ruled with a heavy hand. Having secured the leader of the movement—the second, in fact, within two years—they were not likely to give anyone a chance to take the place of Jesus, as he had taken that of John. This time they meant to crush this new spirit root and branch, and their henchmen were kept busy for years to come—Saul of Tarsus among the rest. This explains why the few disciples who remained loyal to Jesus and who believed in his teachings had to remain quiet during the persecution of the master. Those whom the priests could lay hold of were cast into prison; and the others had to hide or flee the country. They were powerless.

The names of only four contemporary disciples of Jesus have been handed down to us; that is, if we regard Alexander and Rufus as two of them. The others are Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. None of the “apostles” were contemporaries of Jesus. They were members of a sect which was not formed until after the death of Jesus, and probably not until his “resurrection from the dead” had been noised about. As we have seen, the apostles were respected in Jerusalem and tolerated by the priests; from which we may infer that although following out in the main the teaching of Jesus, they must have abandoned that part of it which denounced those in power—or what we may call his “republican” doctrines.

Of Nicodemus we only know that he came to assist Joseph to remove the body of Jesus and to give it reverent burial. “He brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.”

Of Joseph we must make special and honourable mention. Of all the people mentioned in the Gospels, excepting only Jesus himself, to him must be given a place of honour. He comes next to the master whom he loved so well, for whom he risked his life even when his doing so could no longer be of help to Jesus.

This Joseph, “a rich man of Arimathea,” was “an

honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God." "The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them" who condemned Jesus. That is, he not only avowed himself as a sympathizer, but spoke and voted against the angry priests, and thereby drew upon himself their hatred.<sup>1</sup> This same Joseph "went in boldly unto Pilate," according to Mark, or "secretly for fear of the Jews," according to John, and "besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus." "And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre."

Let us remember one other thing about this same Joseph of Arimathea—and that all the more because none of the evangelists have taken any notice of the fact—and that is, that his name is never mentioned until after the arrest of Jesus. He appears on the scene only after "all his disciples forsook him and fled." When the priests planned the destruction of Jesus, Joseph "did not consent to the counsel and deed of them," and when Jesus was dead, and it was a capital offence to be a friend of his, Joseph went boldly to Pilate<sup>2</sup> and craved his body.

Joseph was the type of the true disciple, and it is to him and others like him—and not to the evangelists—that we must consider ourselves indebted in the first place for the preservation of the few fragments of the history and gospel of Jesus that have come down to us. Joseph is also the type of man whom Paul helped to persecute and drag before the priests.

All the Gospels agree that Joseph of Arimathea took charge of the body of Jesus and buried it in a tomb near by according to Jewish custom. But there are many rumours as to what became of the body subsequently. However, we need not speculate as to that; for whatever

<sup>1</sup> There are rumours in the Apocrypha that Joseph was imprisoned but that he succeeded in escaping.

<sup>2</sup> Bound to have been "boldly," for he could not have taken away the body, embalmed, and buried it without the fact being known.

was done with the body, we may rest assured of this, that it went the way of all flesh.

The childish belief that the body came to life again we need not even consider, based as it is on an absurd theory of life, and supported by nothing weightier than a superstitious belief in the potency of Bible prophecies, "which needs must have been fulfilled." But quite apart from these considerations, we may dismiss the story of the resurrection on two much stronger grounds; firstly, because the dead body could not come to life again; and secondly, because the spirit could never suffer death.

The spirit which animated Jesus was no more killed when he was crucified than the heat was destroyed after his body became cold. The one thesis can be proved as positively as the other, and by the same method—with this exception, that the immateriality—and therefore the indestructibility—of "Life" is even more easily demonstrable than that of heat.

The priests had killed only the body of Jesus. The spirit that inspired him remained; and though for a time in abeyance, its voice having been drowned by the superstitious pratings of ignorance, it has never been dead nor silent. Just as a Marconi instrument will send forth its invisible and soundless waves, suffusing the atmosphere with information to whomsoever is capable of receiving it, so the message of Jesus has filled the air all these centuries, but was received only by few; and these for the most part have been martyred in consequence. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not."

Though the tongue that uttered these words has been silenced, the spirit that inspired them is speaking still, is present everywhere around us, has been loudly knocking at the portals of cathedrals, churches, and chapels all these centuries, is doing so at the present day louder than ever, but the chantings inside drown the voice.

"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts!" chant priest and congregation to the strains of the organ, with doors shut and with wool in their ears, so as not to be disturbed in their devotion by the sighs and groans of suffering humanity.

"Not every one that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but *he that doeth the will of my Father* which is in heaven," is the unheeded response of the spirit.

"We praise thee, O Lord."

The voice answers: "It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones shall perish."

"We serve thee, O Lord Christ, and thee only," exclaims the priest, and the voice replies. "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these brethren of mine, ye did it not unto me."

"Glory be to the Lord," they all chant again, and remonstratingly the voice replies: "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

The sermon begins. "God is a jealous God, who will avenge himself on his enemies." "I have not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them," is the reply.

"Your rewards will be in the world to come," explains the priest; but again the voice remonstrates: "God is not a God of the dead, but of the living. Ye do greatly err."

"Those only can be saved who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." Answer: "Whosoever receiveth this child in my name receiveth me."

"Unless a child is baptized, it cannot enter the kingdom of God," blasphemes the priest; and, warningly this time, the voice replies: "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones." "It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones."

But in vain. Priest and congregation do not hear.

"Let us pray," comes from the pulpit, and priest and people shut their eyes—being now blind as well as deaf. A sad, plaintive wail sweeps over the bent heads: "Be

not as the hypocrites are, who love to pray standing in the synagogue and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men . . . and use not vain repetitions as the heathen do ; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." " Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child [i e. without guile or hypocrisy] shall in nowise enter therein."

Sunday after Sunday Jesus is called by most endearing names, but the voice of his spirit is not heard. " Why do you not understand my speech ? " " Even because ye cannot hear my word," is the distressing comment of the voice on its own question.

A few of those furthest away from the altar and nearest to the door have at last caught the sound and are trying to understand the message. Let us join them, and listen to the voice that for so long has been crying in the wilderness.

PART II

THE PHILOSOPHY OF JESUS



## FOREWORD

THE earlier chapters of this second part were written before the outbreak of the present war; the later chapters during the war, but before the death of Francis Joseph of Austria.

## CHAPTER XXV

### THE PLACE OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF JESUS

I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes —*MATT. xi. 25.*

THE philosophy of Jesus could not be better summarized than it has been by the Teacher himself in the sentence "Love thy neighbour as thyself." To him this was the greatest of all commandments, and he made it the pivot of all his teachings.

It has often been objected that the Golden Rule was not original to Jesus. That undoubtedly is so. The same idea has been expressed before and also since his time by many thinkers independently of each other. This only goes to show that it is based on the common experience of mankind. In point of fact, that experience—as will be explained in the next chapter—reaches back into the remotest past, antedating the emergence of man from his primitive beginnings. On it is based the Moral Law, and it is the foundation of organized society.

Were it otherwise ; were this "Rule" merely a figment of the imagination, begotten of the conceit of man—such as are the postulates on which philosophers have built up their elaborate systems—it would not be worth a moment's consideration. We need not waste time, therefore, to inquire whether this or that precept of Jesus was original to him or not ; but only whether it is a correct deduction from the actualities of life ; in other words, a "principle" or "law" of Nature—or, as Jesus would have phrased it, whether it is "the will of God." If it is, it could not be new ; and if it is not, it is not worth discussing the matter at all.

If the principles underlying the precepts of Jesus are real and true, mankind must have been actuated by them from immemorial times ; just as the principle of gravitation was applied long before Sir Isaac Newton formulated his theory. Science (or philosophy, which in its true sense is only another name for science) can do no more than teach man how to discover the "principles of nature" (or "laws of God") and how to apply them. Man can neither *invent* nor *suppress* a "law."

To make ancient authors intelligible it is necessary to translate such of their words and phrases as have become obsolete, or which in course of time have acquired totally different meanings, into their modern equivalents. In the case of Jesus, not only has this necessary precaution been omitted, but meanings have been imported into his words which he could never have intended, and which in many instances could not be justified on any theory except that doctrines, about which he knew nothing, required it so.

Take, by way of example, the sentence "The son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do." <sup>1</sup> Translated into modern thought and imagery, it means that "Man can do nothing of himself, but only what he learns from Nature"—the truth of which, of course, cannot be disputed. Or take this passage: "For the Father loveth the son, and showeth him all the things that himself doeth. and he will show him greater things than these, that ye may marvel." <sup>2</sup>

As interpreted by "divines," these quotations are either meaningless or utter nonsense ; for Jesus is by them represented as the natural offspring of God who astonishes a gaping crowd by performing childish miracles, and alleges that he has been taught these things by his clever father, who will teach him yet other and greater tricks.

But if we read the same passage with an unbiased mind, as we would read the works of other ancient authors—say those of Homer or of Roger Bacon—making due allowance for difference of concepts, of imagery, and of terminology, we shall discover in these words truth and

<sup>1</sup> John v. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. v. 20.

wisdom expressed in telling metaphor beside which our modern way of stating the same truths appears poor and colourless, without being any the less "anthropomorphic." For surely, to say that "man has learnt all he knows from Nature" (sometimes described as "Dame Nature") is no less an anthropomorphic conception than to say that "he has been shown it by the Father."

To the reader who has perused the previous chapters it should not be necessary to point out that "son" or "son of man," when used by Jesus himself, had reference to "mankind" generally, and not exclusively to himself. "Son of man" is a literal translation of the Hebrew "ben Adam," which may be rendered as "son of Adam" or "son of man"; Adam, in Hebrew, being used generically for "man" as well as for the proper name of the "first" man. It is only another instance of how ignorance has read meanings into words or phrases which did not belong to them.

By the way, there is a prophecy as well as a promise in the sentence "He will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel." But unlike most Bible prophecies, this one has literally come true; for the more "the son doeth the things which he sees the Father do," the greater are the marvels which he is shown. We need only transcribe the passage into modern English to see the truth of the statement, and the encouragement it contains to study the workings of nature.

Jesus cannot be interpreted by the same method as Paul. The two philosophies are not only unlike each other, but belong to different categories of thought.

Every one of the multitudinous systems of philosophy may be grouped under one or other of two distinct and well definable categories. One of these will embrace all knowledge derived from observation ("Things which the son hath seen the Father doeth himself"); and the other the logical deductions from arbitrarily assumed "axioms" or "postulates." The one is based on empiricism, which, when pursued methodically, becomes science; the other on doctrines and dialectics. The former category constitutes what is known as "natural

philosophy" or "science"; the latter embraces the vast mass of worthless and useless erudition known as "metaphysics." The teachings of Jesus are of the former category, and those of Paul of the latter. Jesus was essentially a student of nature, and his utterances must be judged from a strictly rational point of view. Then only does it become intelligible what he meant when he said, according to Matthew (v. 18), "Verily, I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law"; or according to Luke, "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one tittle of the law to fail."

It has taken mankind many centuries to rediscover these truths for indeed it is easier to conceive of heaven and earth passing away than of, say, the "law" of gravitation failing.

The same unshaken belief in a world ruled by eternal and immutable laws becomes apparent—almost obvious—in all his utterances so soon as they are stripped of the mysticism with which theology has enveloped them. As, for instance: "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature?" "A sparrow shall not fall on the ground without your Father" (or, in current language, without an "adequate cause"). "The very hairs on your head are all numbered." "Thou canst not make one hair black or white." "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" "Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit."

Or, again, "When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red; and in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?"

All these illustrations are taken from nature and are a clear indication from whence Jesus took his lessons in philosophy.

But this is a lesson which it is still necessary to insist on; for though at last the "reign of law" is recognized in physical phenomena, and tardily admitted also in many

branches of biology, it is still doubted whether there is any natural foundation for morals—using this term in its widest sense.

Now, the merit of Jesus lies in the fact that he recognized nineteen centuries ago what to most people is still a matter of doubt—that there is a natural foundation for human conduct—or morals—and he laid down a number of rules or precepts based on that foundation. If mankind is still floundering in the endeavour to solve the many problems of life, it is not because a complete philosophy of life has not been preached, but because that philosophy has not been understood, and is not understood to-day.

Every religious system has for its object to prescribe “correct conduct,” be it towards a deity, a fetich, one’s tribe or country, or towards one’s fellow-men generally. Every religion, therefore, is intimately related to and dependent on conceptions of life and existence; or, in general terms, on the “aspects of nature.”

The religion of Jesus is no exception. It consists of precepts for right conduct, based on his view of life and existence. These precepts are set forth with sufficient clearness in the Sermon on the Mount and in the Parable of the Last Judgment. But to understand their full meaning and importance it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the problems to which they relate. Then only shall we be able to form a correct estimate of the value of these precepts, and whether they really are so impracticable as is commonly believed. For their high moral tone nobody questions, nor does anybody doubt that if mankind *would* or *could* follow out their dictates all social ills, or man-created evils, would become a thing of the past. ;

I propose, therefore, to discuss first some of the fundamental problems of religious philosophy, with a view to clearing away much of the dialectical garbage with which this subject, more than any other, is corrupted and obscured, and then only to analyse in greater detail the philosophy of Jesus and the precepts deduced therefrom.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE EVOLUTION OF MORALS

Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free — JESUS.

THE question has often been asked, If not from God by direct revelation, whence has man got his morals? Whence his sense of right and wrong? His ideas of justice, of "fair play," of respect for the rights of his neighbours?

It certainly does not seem "natural" to man, as are for instance breathing, feeding, or even self-defence. Morals have to be taught to each succeeding generation, just as is the case with speaking, writing, reading, or any of the acquired arts. Even among highly cultured peoples there is mistrust, fear, envy, and, only too often, open hostility.

If we retrace our steps so as to take a rapid bird's-eye view of "the march of civilization"—as this process of social evolution is appropriately called—the further back we get to primitive man, the less can we find of those qualities which constitute the morals of mankind. And if we pursue this tracing backwards far enough, we reach a stage in the evolution of man void of any trace of justice, fair play, or anything which might be described as human sentiments. Indeed, at this stage primordial man is morally undistinguishable from the brute.

Let us consider two such creatures, or their families, at enmity with each other, as doubtless they often must have been. (We would not have to go back quite so far to find people living in stockaded villages in fear of each other.) In that case it is difficult to conceive of any thought or act on the part of either which would not

tend only to embitter them still further against each other. It is quite unthinkable that such brutes should be capable of doing, or of thinking even, of something which would be likely to mollify an enemy, still less of converting him into a friendly neighbour.

Yet that is what has happened and is happening to-day; for the process is still going on. In the midst of feverish armaments and the clang of weapons<sup>1</sup> the "entente" is born; rival nations who are taught to regard each other as a menace are seeking to fraternize—and some members of these peoples are even dreaming of "the federation of the world" and the "parliament of man," when all distinctions of race or creed shall have given way to a universal brotherhood.

It is no explanation to say that this is due to "civilization." What is called by this name is a *result* and not a *cause* of the process we are contemplating. Like religion (by which I mean codified rules of conduct), "civilization" may become a powerful factor once it has become an institution. But it had to be established first, before there was a human teacher to teach it. How did it come about? What is it which has turned the selfish, savage brute into a civilized, moral being? *Who* or *What* has taught him to know right from wrong; to wax indignant on hearing that someone he does not even know has been harshly dealt with; to talk of "injustice" even when such an act had been committed by a properly constituted judge in accordance with the laws of the land, as sometimes is the case?

John Stuart Mill said of logic that "mankind judged of evidence, and often correctly, before there was a science of logic, or they never could have made it one." The same must be true of morals. Mankind must have been guided by moral considerations long before there was a moral code. They must have disapproved of murder before it could have been enacted "Thou shalt not kill"; and they must have considered it wrong to ill-treat a stranger before hospitality was recognized as a virtue. How has man learnt these lessons?

<sup>1</sup> These lines were written before the outbreak of war in 1914.



The answer is, In the same way as he has learnt whatever else of useful knowledge he has acquired—by *necessity*, in the school of *experience*.

Man had to learn what to do and what to avoid from the earliest beginning of his existence—or perish. The history of his evolution consists in an unbroken series of adaptations to conditions.

By sheer experience, forced upon him rather than self-sought, man has learnt how certain conditions advantaged him, while others caused him discomfort. These first lessons—which are learnt unconsciously long before the dawn of reason—necessarily relate to the immediate and material wants only of the creature, and are learnt by the lower animals as well as by man. Indeed, some animals exhibit a high degree of intelligence and forethought, making provision for the future—be it in providing shelter against weather or possible enemies or in laying in stores of food. Man himself has often pointed to bees and ants as examples of industry and thrift.

The same necessity which has taught these insects their economies and their arts has also taught man to build houses, to till the ground, to make tools, to delve, spin, plot, and contrive his many arts and sciences.

And in the same school—*experience*—and from the same teacher—*necessity*—has he learnt his morals, in the manner which I will briefly indicate.

No matter what man undertakes, he can prosper only in proportion as the conditions are in his favour or against him. At first it is the physical conditions, the material wants, the comforts of *self* only—that is, the needs and the greed of the brute—that engage his attention. Next come considerations of safety and provision for the future, which force on him the first social obligation. For he is bound to discover, not only that it is to the interest of his comfort and well-being, but *an essential condition of his very existence*, that his immediate neighbours should not be hostile to him. But this he can secure in one way only, and that is by not being an aggressor himself. It is from sheer necessity at first, and not from any innate sentiment, that primitive man has learnt to live at

peace with his immediate neighbours, and to respect the life and property of others. He *had* to learn this lesson, for the penalty was death and extinction.<sup>1</sup>

If, out of jealousy or vindictiveness, he should destroy his neighbour's shelter, he would in all probability risk having his own shelter destroyed. He would not dare do that even to a much weaker neighbour. For if he thus became a menace to the weak, the latter would eventually combine against him for mutual protection.

In this wise has man learnt what to do and what to avoid, whether in respect of physical conditions, social obligations, or moral conduct. He had to learn that it is wrong to murder, to steal, to destroy his neighbour's hut, to move his landmarks, or to do to his neighbour anything which he would resent himself. A usage is thus established which becomes a habit, and in time is crystalized into some such maxim as "Do unto others as you would that others should do unto you," and later still into "Love thy neighbour as thyself." The sentiment comes last of all, only after what at first was a necessity has become an established social *habit*, and later still a social *law*.

Thus from necessity, by the slow process of adaptation to conditions (unconsciously at first, and later consciously by the application of the experiences of the past), has man learnt his arts, his sciences, his morals, his likes and dislikes, his sentiments, his love, his poetry, his all.

This shatters the belief in the childish legend of the burning bush, and of Moses receiving "two tables of stone written with the finger of God." But instead of these alleged "tables of testimony" we may behold the actual process of "the writing of the law by the finger of God"; not, however, on tables of stone, but in the hearts and souls of mankind, in the temple of living, throbbing, creative nature, so that "he who has eyes may see" and need no longer be groping in the dark.

<sup>1</sup> These first beginnings of respect for the life of "neighbours" are discernible already among animals, even among the carnivora. They do not menace each other, however famished they may be.

It is not to human wisdom that we are indebted for what there is of organized society or comity between nations. That wonderful social organization, so intricately complex, which combines the various peoples of the world, in spite of themselves, into an interdependence scarcely less wonderful than is the organism of our body, has not been conceived by human brain, nor called into being by human skill. It grew and developed as did our bodies, not by help of man, but often *against his wishes and strivings*. The two great institutions of State and Church, which affect to be responsible for the existence of organized society, are themselves the product of those invisible powers which they are opposing; and communities have to learn the "law of life" in the same way as individuals. And in the same way communities are floundering in the dark, often doing things which are opposed to their true destiny, paying the penalty for each error until they discover the right way.

State and Church have done all they could—are doing so to-day—to keep the peoples apart, separated by racial, political, "religious," social, and commercial prejudices. What are called "the ethics of Jesus" have no share at all in the *deliberate* acts of society; for if at any other time than on Sundays they are mentioned at all, it is in derision only at their "utter impracticability."

And yet—greatest of all mysteries!—mankind has been influenced and educated by the very principle ("Do unto others as you would that others should do unto you") which their philosophy condemns. Just as children are made to do things the purport of which they neither know nor suspect, so mankind are doing things which they neither desire to do nor are conscious of doing. Whilst denying any directing force outside of their own will, they are unwittingly obeying a higher power, and are being guided by a wisdom greater than their own.

What is it which, against their wishes or intentions, turns unreasoning brutes into rational creatures; savages into civilized people; enemies into friendly neighbours; and—to crown all—can gather into an "International Conference of Social Service" a heterogeneous crowd of

persons whose very creeds require that they should hate, despise, and persecute each other?

Reason as we may, there is a power, a principle, a tendency, a *something*—call it what you like and conceive it as what you can or may—which impels us in a certain direction, without our knowledge or consent, and mostly against our will.

We plot and scheme and contrive; yet it is not our wishes or our own counsels which guide our steps. Like children watched over by their nurse, we follow along a path which has been selected for us, and within the limited confines of which alone we are permitted to indulge in whatever pranks, whims, or frivolities we please. We forget the nurse, fail to realize the barriers which prevent our straying too far, and are fond of believing that the road along which we are gambolling is of our own choosing, and that it will lead us to a place pictured by our fanciful imagination. But it is all self-deception, nevertheless; for all the time we are unconsciously obeying a power which we can neither control nor resist.

Willingly I follow. If against my will,  
A baffled rebel, I follow still.

All the human desires, forces, and agencies tend in one direction; whereas our destiny seems to lie in another. And we must reach our destiny or perish. Our only choice is to live or die.

Is it fatalism, then? the reader will probably ask. Not so. At least, no more so than it is "fatalism" in the physical arts to know what we must do if we would succeed. The "law" and the conditions remain the same, whatever may be our aspect of life. "The son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the father do." He must watch "the Father" (or "Dame Nature," if preferred) and learn *how* or *what* to do so that he may prosper.

Our Teacher has a peculiar method of teaching—not mankind only, but the whole of organic nature. The fiat is, "This do and thou shalt live; or disobey at your peril." And there is no escape from this decree. In the words of Jesus, we must "fulfil" (i.e. obey) the law, or pay the penalty "to the uttermost farthing."

## CHAPTER XXVII

### "GOD" OR "NATURE" ?

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth—EXOD. xx 4.

MUCH as has been said and written on the subject of "Godhood," the whole controversy may be resolved into a matter of convenient conception and terminology. As to the *facts*, there is no room for doubt or difference of opinion. Nobody can—nobody does—deny the existence of some occult principle, force, or power *in* or *behind* the world of phenomena, least of all the student of science, be he "theist" or "atheist." Science is based on the reality of that nameless, incomprehensible, elusive "something."

On the other hand, even the most doctrinaire theologian acknowledges—in deeds, if not in words—the "reign of law"; for although he claims for his deity the power—if so minded—to change the course of nature at will, he really does not expect anything of the kind to happen. The fact that he describes the alleged abnormal events fabled of in the legends of his faith as "supernatural" and "miraculous" shows that, whatever his theories may be, in practice he recognizes an established order in the universe.

Whilst, therefore, people may dispute about the "attributes" of their tribal gods, there can be no doubt about a *primum mobile*, or a governing principle in the universe. The only room there is for difference of opinion is concerning conception and terminology. These, in any case, must be arbitrary; for of that which we cannot com-

prehend we can form no image. We may think of a "Father which is in heaven," as did Jesus, and substitute, when so required, the masculine pronoun, or speak of "Nature" and use the feminine pronoun; whilst those who object to such "gross anthropomorphism" may substitute "cosmic spirit," "principle," "law," or "logos," and use the impersonal "it." In none of these cases will it be possible to avoid "anthropomorphism" or human imagery.

We cannot comprehend "God." Hence, no doubt, the injunction printed at the head of this chapter. Hence also—I surmise—the supposed dread to pronounce the name of the deity, which in all probability arose out of the fact that the sages who pondered the subject could think of none. Mankind has not yet succeeded any better, despite our sometimes fanciful scientific terminology.

This, however, is far from being a denial of "God." It merely is a frank recognition of our ignorance, and a warning that the word "God" is merely a symbol, as are such words as "gravitation," "electricity," "magnetism," etc., which in physics denote the unknown principle which governs particular groups of phenomena. Like the  $x$  in algebra, so "God" stands for something about the reality of which there can be no doubt, but about the nature of which, or its *modus operandi*, we know nothing.

Human imagery cannot go beyond the experience of the senses; hence the impossibility of devising a terminology for the occult forces which shall be free from empiricism or anthropomorphism. But though we cannot form a correct conception of that which is incomprehensible, we should at least avoid such as are incompatible with what is deducible from the phenomena.

At present two theories hold the field, neither of which is compatible with the phenomena. The one is that of a moody, capricious being conceived in the image of man; and the other that of "blind forces." We shall have to reject both these theories as equally untenable.

The one is as far from the truth as the other, and both are equally misleading and mischievous in their influence on human thought and action.

He who can think of "*blind* forces of nature" can have but a superficial acquaintance with the wonderful facts revealed by science. No adjective could be less appropriate; for it is impossible to think of anything which is more sure or more precise than these so-called "forces." They are ever present, ever alert, ever ready to act, never failing, never erring, always "mathematically exact" in their results, whatever may be the conditions. In fact, they are "omnipresent" and "omniscient." Were it not so, science would be impossible.

That these "forces" are called "blind" is only the wish or intention of man. It is not the "forces" which are blind, but the philosopher who can think so; who—oblivious to the fact that he himself is the *product* of these "forces"—is yet unable to conceive of "purposefulness" apart from human volition and human agencies, and who makes man the source and standard of all that is understood by such words as "moral" or "intellectual."

It is an aspect of nature conceived from an anthropocentric point of view, suggested by subjective inspirations rather than deduced from the phenomena. The aphorism "Not all are free who laugh at their fetters" is especially applicable to a certain class of philosophers who, whilst mocking at the superstitions of others, are themselves the victims of false mental concepts. Few people only are capable of emancipating the mind from the tyranny of ideas suggested by the senses; or can contemplate nature in the abstract, and from a purely objective standpoint. Fewer are they who have made the attempt and have realized the great truth that these occult so-called "forces of nature" are not *of* God, but *are* God.

One would scarcely think to look in the Gospels for so enlightened a view. Yet, by a curious combination of paradoxical circumstances, it is there—or rather in one

problem which has ever vexed the human mind—the mystery of the origin of all things—stated in language as concise and as near to the point as it is possible for mortal man to approach, that it is hard to think how it might be improved upon.

We do not always give to ancient philosophy the consideration which it deserves. For one thing, our knowledge of it is very imperfect. Most of it has come down to us garbled and corrupted, as understood and interpreted by the superstitious vulgar crowd. This is particularly true of the philosophy of Jesus. For the most part, his actual words have been lost to mankind. But even those few fragments of his teachings which have (almost miraculously) escaped destruction have not come down to us in their original language or with their original meanings. Jesus probably spoke in Aramaic; the Gospels are in Greek; and the English translation has been dominated by considerations of "faith."

But even where the translation is literal, the meanings of some words have changed, so that their modern connotations no longer express what at one time they did. I have already given several illustrations of such perversions. The opening verses of the Gospel of "John" will supply yet another striking example.

The passage, as rendered in the A.V., is as follows: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made."

The translation is far from being unassailable. To begin with, "logos" has been rendered by "Word"; and as this makes the passage devoid of meaning, "Word" has been interpreted to mean "Christ."

The word "logos" in the N.T. has been translated into English in more than twenty different ways, with meanings so far apart as "Christ" in the passage just quoted, to such colourless phrase-words as "thing," "rumour," "tidings," "utterance," etc. This in itself is sufficient to show that the translators did not [or would



not] apprehend the sense in which this word was used by the author of these verses.

"Logos" was used to express abstract ideas relative to thought or intellectuality and always connoted order, system, or method, as, for instance, in such words as "theme," "essay," "idea," "principle," or any ordered statement of a rational thought. It is in such a sense that the word has found its way into the English language (e.g. in "logic," "geology," "pathology," etc.); and it is in such a sense that it was employed by Jesus, as when he says in his exhortations, "Whosoever heareth these '*logous toutous*'" (mistranslated as "sayings of mine") "and doeth them . . ." etc.

Jesus clearly must have referred to what in modern language are called "laws" or "principles" of nature. This not only appears so from the context, but is made obvious by the fact that he interchanges the word "logos" with "entole" (commandment) and "nomos" ("law"). Thus, for instance, in Matt. xv. 3 we read, "Why do ye also transgress the *commandment* ('entole') of God"; and in verse 5: "Thus have you made the *commandment* ('logos') of God of none effect." Compare also, "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass [i.e. while the universe remains] one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the *law* ('nomon') till all be fulfilled." Or, again, "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one tittle of the law ('nomon') to fail."

If still further proof were needed as to what Jesus referred to by "logous," it can be found in the fact that he emphasizes that these "logous" were eternal and immutable, and could not be disregarded without incurring inevitable consequences. No rational man could make such claims for "sayings of his." The context forbids such rendering.

After this lengthy but necessary digression, let us return to the opening passage in John, and consider what its author may have intended to convey by it.

It evidently relates to the origin of things—including the origin of God. "Who made the world?" is a question which must be as old as the thinking faculties of man-

kind. The common answer is "God." But this really is no answer at all, but a mere evasion; it only shifts the problem a little further back. Automatically and involuntarily the next question forces itself on the mind, even though we dare not lend it a tongue, "And who made God?"

The passage in John does not give answers to these questions, for there are none. But it certainly says all that man can know or say on the subject. This will become clear if we give to *logos* the meaning which belongs to it, and amend the English translation accordingly. The verses would then read somewhat as follows.—

"In the beginning there was the *logos*, and the *logos* was with God, and (in fact) the *logos* was God. The same (*autos*) is true of God also. All things originated out of the same (*auton*) and without (or apart from) the same (*auton*) not anything which exists was created. In the same [i.e. in '*logos*'] was life, and that life was the light of mankind. And the light shone in the darkness;<sup>1</sup> and the darkness comprehended it not."<sup>2</sup>

Paraphrased still further, "The *law* or *principle* is the origin of all things, including the origin of God, for *the law was God*. And this law, ever active and creative, is the light which leadeth mankind, although they in their ignorance [or '*darkness*'] know it not."

It is the most concise general statement of what can be said on the subject. Let the reader substitute for *logos*, "unknown cause," "creative power," "active principle," "energy," "law," "God," "nature," or any other such abstraction which he may prefer, or which appeals to his mind, and the statement will correctly express his own cosmology, whatever it may happen to be.

That "John" could not have been the author of the passage needs hardly to be argued, for he did not under-

<sup>1</sup> As it is doing still

<sup>2</sup> Note that the pronoun which has been rendered in verse 2 by the impersonal "the same" and in verse 3 by the personal "him" is in the Greek the same word, and that the context here does not justify the use of the latter.

stand its meaning. But it is forcibly reminiscent of the concise and convincing style of the Sage of Nazareth.<sup>1</sup>

It is an intelligible and a rational cosmology, for it postulates that only which is manifest: eternal, immutable *principles* or "logous," which we can behold at work as he did, and so are able to verify both his observations and his deductions.

<sup>1</sup> I do not suggest, however, that Jesus was the originator of the conception. In ancient Greek philosophy the "logos" as the principle behind the phenomena was well understood.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF NATURE

Raise the stone, and there thou shalt find me ; cleave the log, and there am I—NEW SAYINGS OF JESUS

I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.—JOHN xiv 20.

Wie sich Alles zum Ganzen webt,  
Eins ins Andre wirkt und lebt ;  
Himmelskräfte auf und nieder steigen,  
Und sich die goldenen Eimer reichen.

GOETHE.

THE philosophy of Jesus differs from modern science in conception, in imagery, and in terminology ; but not in principle. The basis of both is the unconditional acceptance of an order in nature, attributed by modern science to the "law of causation," and by Jesus to "the will of the Father which is in heaven." Both views are necessarily conventional only. The order exists : that is all we know. We do not know *why* it is so ; nor *who* or *what* caused it to be so. We simply give it a name because of the mental necessity. And if we could only remember always that the name is merely a symbol without any signification of its own, it would probably not matter what word or phrase we used for the purpose. That, however, is not the case. Words suggest ideas, and ideas conceptions, which in their turn may lead to conclusions which, but for the name selected, might never have been thought of.

We need consider only two such systems or aspects of nature : the theistic view of Jesus and the atheistic view of modern science, as they are the only two systems which recognize an ordered Cosmos. With the theological systems which ignore this reign of law, and which assume the universe to be presided over by a deity who may be

induced by incantation, flattery, or bribe to alter the course of nature, we need have no further concern.

In saying that modern science is atheistic, I must not be understood as saying that every natural philosopher is necessarily an atheist, but merely that his science is atheistic in the sense in which the ancient Greek philosophers applied this description to those sciences the theory of which was understood, and could be explained without the interposition of the deity (e.g. mathematics or mechanics), in contradistinction to subjects which could not thus be explained, and which constituted the "divine" sciences. Every science which could be reduced to principles, rules, and formulæ was "divine" no longer but became an "atheistic" science. Astronomy is an example of a science which has thus passed from one category into the other.

In this sense religion itself, if based on principles deduced from known phenomena of nature, may be made into an exact science which might then be described as "atheistic" without any contradiction in terms. There is no essential difference, for instance, between the theism of Jesus and the atheism of modern science as far as the study of phenomena is concerned. Each recognizes eternal, immutable "laws" which are the same in their effects, no matter how conceived or how named. Under either view, "The sun shines and the rain descends on the just and unjust alike," without either frown or favour.

Yet there is much more involved in all this than mere difference of conception or terminology; for—as already pointed out—names may suggest ideas, and ideas suggest theories, until a philosophic system is evolved which dominates the thought and actions of those who come under its influence.

We know nothing of an objective world, and the subjective world is essentially what we conceive it to be. It is these subjective imaginings—the pictures mirrored on the mind—whence man derives his philosophy, which then gives direction to thought and actions and moulds human character.

The conception of a "cruel, callous nature," for in-

stance, "ruling with fangs and claws, ever favouring the strong and crushing the weak," will inspire other thoughts and ideals than the imagery of "a loving Father who is kind even to the unthankful and evil." There is no need to argue the point, for both views have had their adherents and defenders, and we can point to actual results.

Out of the former has been evolved the philosophy of might, with the powerful brute—euphemistically called the "superman"—as its ideal; whilst the latter has inspired the Sermon on the Mount with its gospel of justice, love, and mercy.

Nor can there be any doubt as to the different tendencies of these two schools of philosophy. Each is bound to bring forth fruit after its own kind: the one may produce a Cambyzes, a Nero, a Napoleon, or perhaps a Croesus; and the other a Gautama, a Jesus, a Father Damien, or a Florence Nightingale.

In trying to form a judgment as between these opposite aspects of nature, let us guard against being misled by two popular errors. One of these is that everything which smacks of "religion" or "theism" is necessarily baseless superstition; and the other that whatsoever is opposed to manifest superstition is necessarily sound "science."

As I have already pointed out, a theistic conception of the universe, such as that of Jesus, may be quite as rational as an atheistic one, provided that the conception is symbolic only, and no deductions are made from it. There is nothing more "scientific" about a "cruel, callous nature" than there is about a "kind Father." Illustrations may be found, of course, in support of, as well as in opposition to, either view. But this only proves that neither is a true deduction from the phenomena, but a mental concept only, suggested in each case by the particular aspect of nature which happened to strike the observer's imagination.

In precisely the same manner have originated the ideas from which have been derived the terms "electricity," "magnetism," "gravitation," etc., all of which are mere

*names* or *symbols* of the unknown causes of the phenomena to which they relate. Thus "electricity" has been derived from "electron," the Greek word for amber; "magnetism" from a town in Asia where the "load-stone" found; and "gravitation" from the fact that bodies when unsupported fall, or gravitate, to the ground.

But as Jesus contemplated mankind rather than physical phenomena, it must have been as natural for him to think of a "father" as it was for the philosopher who investigated the phenomena of the "elektron" (i.e. amber) to think of "electricity" as the name for the unknown cause or "law" of the phenomena.

No valid conclusions can be drawn from conceptions, however derived. We can do so from well-established generalizations only—the so-called "laws"—derived by observation from the phenomena to which they relate—irrespective of how we conceive the phenomena to have been caused.

Nevertheless, and notwithstanding repeated warnings by the few more accurate thinkers, the vast majority of even "educated" people have been constantly misled, and not only have regarded a purely symbolical nomenclature as representing entities, but, by giving precise meanings to the terms, by means of definitions, proceeded to deduce from them most fanciful conclusions.

Hence it has been found necessary in the pursuit of the sciences to revise such general conceptions whenever a closer acquaintance with the phenomena has shown them to conflict with the latter. In such a case, either fresh meanings have been given to the terms that were in common use; or, where this could not be done without risk of confusion, an entirely new conception had to be substituted for the former one.

The sciences afford illustrations in plenty of either practice. Such words as "law," "matter," "force," "energy," "property," "affinity," etc., have acquired meanings in connection with science quite distinct from their ordinary connotations; whilst some conceptions had to be abandoned entirely as being no longer compatible

with ascertained facts. As examples may be mentioned "spirits," "phlogiston," "electric fluids," the "vis vitæ," etc.

These examples are sufficient to show that the manner of how we *conceive* the phenomena to have been caused need not interfere with their study or affect the truth of any conclusions *deduced from the phenomena*. It cannot be contended, for instance, that the work of the early natural philosophers was any the less "scientific," or their investigations any the less valuable, because certain of their views of nature have since been found to be inconsistent with the facts. For in this respect modern science is in no better a position. We still speak of "matter," of "atoms," of "elements," of "forms of energy" and many other such hypothetical conceptions, without, however, attaching any definite meaning to these terms, or drawing conclusions from them as if they represented realities in nature.

The point I am trying to make is this, that the truths of science do not depend on such fundamental conceptions or general aspects of nature, but on *the correctness of the generalizations which are deduced directly from the phenomena, and which constitute the "principles" or "laws" of the sciences*.

Thus viewed, it becomes clear that our philosophy must be deduced directly from the phenomena; and our views of nature, or our general conception of it, must be based thereon, and not *vice versa*. To assume a god, to ascribe to *him, her, or it* certain attributes, and then deduce from such imaginings a philosophy, is manifestly an inversion of the method which experience teaches to be the only means of obtaining trustworthy information; i.e. by observation.

But it is no less serious an error to assume "callous, cruel nature" or "blind forces," and then build thereon a philosophy as if the assumption were a solid fact. The one course is as irrational (or "unscientific," to use a common phrase) as the other.



## CHAPTER XXIX

### THE MORAL "LAW"

There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so —  
SHAKESPEARE

Therefore man is lord of the sabbath also — JESUS

When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and the knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul, discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee, to deliver thee from the way of the evil — PROV. II. 10-12.

MORALS, as commonly understood, is largely a question of time, place, and circumstances. What is virtue in one place, or in the opinion of some people, may be regarded elsewhere, or by other people, as abomination. *Recognized* criteria which are universally applicable—such, for instance, as the physical sciences afford for guidance in the arts—there are none. Morals, when not a matter of custom, are too often merely a matter of opinion; and the only guidance we possess so far is public sentiment or the law of the land.

The question is—and it has often been asked—are there any principles underlying human conduct from which might be deduced a moral "law"; i.e. a standard or guiding principle by which to judge whether a certain act is "right" or "wrong"?

This question we may unhesitatingly answer in the affirmative. If an act can be either "good" or "bad," "right" or "wrong"—in whatever sense—there must of necessity be an underlying principle or factor which makes it so. The aim of this chapter is to discover this principle.

In a former chapter (xxiii) I have endeavoured to trace the origin of morals to necessity—the source of everything which man is has. or knows. The whole

existence of man is a continuous process of adaptation to conditions; and in this ceaseless struggle for existence he has evolved his form, his constitution, his organism, his habits, his knowledge—in short, all that he is or knows. He had to learn how to do, or how not to do, things so as to ensure his existence. From his earliest beginnings he was groping for an answer to the question "What must I do to live?" It is the question of questions; and every one of the multitudinous problems which mankind are seeking to solve are but so many subordinated details of this all-embracing supreme quest. It is the riddle of the Sphinx which we must solve—or perish. To contemporary science it is known as "the struggle for existence" and "the survival of the fittest"—using these phrases in the sense in which their author, Charles Darwin, employed them.

It is in the course of this struggle, and as a direct result of it, that form, functions, and dispositions of organic beings have been evolved; and it is only by studying the incidents of this struggle—that is, the *natural history of man*—that we may hope to learn anything about the nature or the ultimate aim of this quest which man—in common with the rest of organic nature—is unconsciously pursuing. Only late in his existence, after the dawn of reason, does he become aware that he is groping for something without knowing what it is or how to find it.

But while the struggle is the same for man and brute, it is man only who is sufficiently advanced intellectually to come under the category of *moral* considerations; for, as we shall presently see, morals depend on intelligence rather than on piety or virtue.

The difference in this respect between man and beast is this, that whilst the unreflecting creature is always eager to satisfy the desires or needs of the moment, regardless of future consequences, an intelligent being will hesitate and consider possible later results of what he is about to do. He will look ahead, and often prefer to forgo the pleasures of the moment in order to ward off future suffering. Thus it will be seen that the moral sense—

that is, the faculty of being able to choose the good and avoid the evil—depends on intelligence, on being able not merely to foresee, but mentally to realize in anticipation, future pain or pleasure. On this depends the efficacy of rewards or punishments.

The further ahead a person can see, and the more vividly he can realize mentally the future pain or pleasure which might result from any act of his, the more powerful will be the incentive for that person to do, or to abstain from doing, certain things. Where this double faculty of foreseeing the future and of realizing effects in anticipation is wanting, there can be no question of morals. Such people might, nevertheless, observe the laws and customs of the land—be it from habit or necessity—but from a moral point of view they are little better than a trained and domesticated animal. We may call such people civilized, cultured, well-behaved, etc., but certainly not *moral* in the sense of *doing right* because *it is right*.

But, then, what is “right”? Once more we are confronted with this question of questions, and considering that for untold centuries the greatest thinkers had their powers taxed to find a satisfactory answer, the reader will, I hope, be indulgent if I enter into the details of this problem at greater length than the scope of the present work would seem to justify, or than would be necessary if the “Science of Conduct”—or *Morals*—were already established. But it would be futile to discuss morals without a clear understanding of what the word implies; or to form a judgment of the merits of any system of morals without some standard to judge by.

Speaking generally, we may regard as *right* conduct that which leads to *right* results. This is almost like saying that the end justifies the means. Strictly speaking, that is so, provided we have the *ultimate* or *final* result in view. But we must discriminate—as already indicated—between the desires and necessities of the moment and the requirements or necessities of continued existence, or life in its wider and widest sense. It is obvious that the latter is of greater importance than the former; that it

‘ . . . would even go to gain the whole world if the

conquest can be made only at the sacrifice of one's existence. Hence it is that the intelligent being will forgo certain pleasures of the moment for the sake of future and more lasting happiness.

Had we clear ideas of what (in our ignorance) we are striving for—our destiny—we should not be lacking that guidance. We should not then be sacrificing the essential to the trifling, the eternal to the frivolities of the moment, as man is prone to do. For then utility (in the truest sense) would no longer be antagonistic to morals; and the most selfish person would, of necessity, be also the most high-minded because the wisest; and altruistic because desiring his own greatest good. For the *true interest* of the individual is not antagonistic to, but identical with, that of his fellow-men.

Where men err and stumble is in not recognizing that this struggle for life is neither self-sought nor self-directed, but is imposed upon us by conditions and circumstances that are not of our making; which we may control within certain limits only, but from which we cannot escape. To conform, therefore, to these conditions—or "laws"—is not *virtue* but *wisdom*; and to disregard them is not *sin* or *wickedness* (in a theological sense) but ignorance or folly.

From this view-point the injunctions of Jesus acquire a meaning which is altogether different from that read into them by the Churches; as, for instance, when he says: Therefore whosoever heareth these *logous* (i.e. principles or laws) and obeyeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock . . . and everyone that heareth these *logous* and disregards them shall be likened unto a *foolish* man, which built his house upon the sand, and in consequence had to pay the penalty of his folly.

This is the true and rational conception of virtue and sin, right and wrong, duty and transgression. It differs in no essential from right or wrong in respect of "physical" acts, and there is nothing strained in the endeavour of Jesus to illustrate *moral* right or wrong by the *physical* process of house-building. In either case we must con-

form to immutable laws, or pay the penalty. "For verily I say unto you, that it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail."

A morality which is opposed to one's own *true interest*, which constantly demands self-sacrifice, is unnatural, and therefore cannot be purposive or *moral*. Sacrifice is, of course, unavoidable if we seek lasting happiness rather than merely momentary enjoyment. Such sacrifices are constantly and cheerfully being made by the enlightened—individuals as well as communities—and *in direct proportion to their degree of intelligence*. But such sacrifices, if based on forethought and wisdom, are necessarily also to the interest of those who make them. Whilst those who think that they can advantage themselves at the expense of their neighbours are as foolish as the man who built his house on sand. Their success can be temporary only.

It would not be difficult to establish the truth of this thesis by argument, were it necessary to do so. But that would be quite superfluous. The evidence of experience is too overwhelming to need any other proof; for the whole of our civilization and social institutions have been forced on mankind by the necessity of seeking safety for self by securing it to one's neighbours. The *contrat social*—as it has mistakenly been called—is not the *cause* but the *result* of existing amenities between individuals or nations.

It is in the school of experience and from necessity that man has learnt to respect the rights of his neighbour, and such maxims as "Love thy neighbour as thyself" or "Honesty is the best policy" are but the empirical formulæ in which the results of experience have been expressed.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Even what is called "commercial morality" may be traced to wisdom rather than to consideration for others. "Charity begins at home" says another of these empirical generalizations, and expresses a fundamental truth. It must have been a wise man who first made the discovery that honest dealing is preferable to what are known as "the tricks of the trade"; and he was good and honest only because he was wise in the first place. No trader of intelligence or repute needs a law officer

Right conduct, then, depends on a clear understanding of *ultimate aims*. We are seldom in doubt of what the moment seems to require; and if we hesitate nevertheless, it is because of some doubt as to future consequences. The unreasoning animal is seldom<sup>2</sup> restrained by considerations of the future. And man is so restrained in direct proportion to his intelligence; i.e. his ability to foresee the future and to know how to ward off consequences that might militate against the purpose he is pursuing.

Morals, therefore, depend on knowledge and intelligence. A knowledge of aim as a first condition, and intelligence to be able to forgo sometimes the satisfaction of momentary desires for the sake of future and more permanent enjoyments.

From this point of view it will be seen that morals and pleasure, far from being necessarily antagonistic, should coincide; that which secures the most lasting happiness being also the most "moral." Pleasure, therefore, is not sin merely because it is pleasant and gratifying; but sometimes may be *foolish* because leading to opposite results.

This is the aim of all ethics, and of all our social laws and customs. But these laws and customs do not always tend in the right direction. Mankind is still groping in the dark; and although the counsels are many, they are contradictory and confusing. The aim of moral philosophy is (or should be) to discover some sure guidance which shall enable us always to choose the good and avoid the evil.

Has Jesus succeeded in discovering these rules? Are his precepts the fruits of the tree of knowledge which shall

interests would be at stake if he departed from the path of fair dealing. And if, nevertheless, society has need of laws to protect itself against cheats, it is only because of want of intelligence on the part of some of its members; or because of the unwisdom of social institutions which often force people, through their necessities, to yield to temptations.

<sup>2</sup> Some such considerations, however, must be conceded to many animals, even when not specially trained by man. E.g. mice and rats learn to avoid traps, and many animals have outposts to watch for enemies. Others show foresight and forethought in their mode of nest-building, in protecting their young, in laying in stores of food, etc.

lead us to the tree of life ? He himself certainly claimed no less for his logoi. Was he right after all ?

This much we are bound to admit, that he has not yet been proved to have been wrong. His guidance has not yet been accepted, and his philosophy has not been put to the test. His precepts have been declared to be noble in conception but impracticable and impossible. But if this is true, then there can be nothing lofty or noble about them ; for then they must be based on error, and their author must have built his house on sand.

Fortunately there is a way out of this dilemma. For if these precepts are truly based on the eternal, immutable laws of " Our Father which is in heaven," then we should be able to confirm his deductions ; for those laws are still with us. If Jesus was right, we should be able to deduce the same rules from the phenomena ; nay, then we should be bound to arrive at the same conclusions. But to that end we must explore " the kingdom of heaven," and not " the kingdom of man." In other words, we must study the *natural history* of man, and not his civil history, which is chiefly a record of human errors and blunders.

## CHAPTER XXX

### THE DESTINY OF MAN

I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing : therefore choose life, that *both thou and thy seed may live* —DEUT xxx 19

Life is more than meat, and the body than raiment —MATT vi. 25.

It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish —Ibid. xviii. 14.

THERE can be no real difference of opinion regarding our general conclusion that right conduct is more a matter of wisdom than of goodness. No one intelligent enough to foresee the full consequences of his actions is likely to do aught to his own hurt or undoing. It is unnatural to do so ; and when such acts are, nevertheless, committed—as a result of despair—they are rightly regarded as abnormal and irrational. The only debatable point is as to what constitutes *ultimate good*.

To be able to answer this question we must first seek to discover the mainspring of human strivings. By which I do not mean the proximate, conscious, or deliberate motives for the doings of individuals or their aggregates, but the *primum mobile* which antedates human consciousness ; the cause or causes to which man owes his existence ; the *fiat* which he unconsciously obeys even while denying the existence of such an impelling power. In short, a knowledge of “ the things which are hid from the wise and prudent, but have been revealed unto babes.”

It is not in musty parchment or papyri where we may hope to find the needed information, but in the eternal records which are accessible to all who have eyes to see and understanding to comprehend. That mainspring of all our activities is the *instinct*—as it is called—of *self-preservation* ; preservation, that is, not of self only, but, in even a greater measure, that of the *tribe*.



The love of offspring is unquestionably one of the strongest—if not *the* strongest—impulses in mankind ; or, for that matter, throughout organic nature. The only other instinct which is at all comparable to it is that of individual self-preservation. To call this a sentiment is to ignore that it antedates the dawn of reason and self-consciousness.

As if in obedience to a fiat, care for the young has at all times been the chief solicitude of parents—long before there could be any question of reason or sentiment in the matter. Woe betide those who neglect this obligation, for the punishment is *extinction*.

Obviously, therefore, this impulse, instinct, sentiment—or whatever one may choose to call it—is not the creation of man, nor the outcome of his evolution, but rather the *cause* of it. Self-preservation and race-preservation may be said to have created man, for they are the chief factors in the creative process known as “ evolution ” or “ the struggle for existence.” It is this process which has made man what he is, whether we contemplate him morphologically, physiologically, mentally, morally, or as a sociological unit. He has evolved into his present state without knowledge or intention on his own part, often in spite of himself. And although, once he has become cognizant of the process, man himself may take a conscious part in this creative work, as yet his efforts in this direction are of a limited scope and often of doubtful value.

About the *primum mobile* just referred to there can be no doubt. Consciously or unconsciously it is man's first and last object to live and to propagate his species. That, beyond doubt or question, is his destiny so far as his earthly pilgrimage is concerned. The process is going on all around us without intermission, and—despite occasional ebbings and regressions—*always in one direction only*.

Just as the river seeks the ocean ; and just as by obstructing or diverting its course it may be retarded, but can never be prevented from reaching its destination : so mankind is pressing onward and forward towards some destiny. and—despite doubts and follies which

often retard the process, sometimes even give it a retrograde direction—this onward march can never be arrested.

Whether that process or that destiny is “premeditated” in the sense in which finite man understands this phrase; or, as in the case of the river, is the result of necessity; or whether this necessity is “designed,” “decreed,” or “premeditated,” I do not propose to inquire into—any more than it would occur to a chemist to ask *why* the properties of bodies are just what they happen to be. We have to content ourselves with the facts as we find them.

This is the limit—for the present, at any rate—to man’s curiosity. He may learn *what* to do and *how* to do it; but he can know nothing about the Why or Wherefore. But let us remember that this limit to human desire for knowledge is the same everywhere around us, in the strictly physical sciences as much as in the realms of thought and mind. We know that bodies attract each other; that substances combine; that an “electrified” body will exhibit certain manifestations; and that a seed placed in the ground will germinate and transform substances within its reach into new compounds, to the astonishment and envy of the chemist. But we do not know *why* all this is so.

Nevertheless, by observing the conditions which give rise to different phenomena, man has learnt how to produce these at will and to take part in the creative process. We cannot, forsooth, arrest or alter the course of nature. But by observing what is essential and unalterable, we can accelerate or retard our own evolution, and *within those inexorable limits* even direct it. As John Stuart Mill said:—

Though we cannot emancipate ourselves from the laws of nature as a whole, we can escape from any particular law of nature, if we are able to withdraw ourselves from the circumstances in which it acts. Though we can do nothing except through laws of nature, we can use one law to counteract another. According to Bacon’s maxim, we can obey nature in such a manner as to command it<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Three Essays on Religion.*

And this is true of mental and moral as of physical phenomena ; of the laws of life as of mechanics ; of conduct as of any other incident in the sphere of human activity

From these reflections it is possible to deduce how far we are free agents, and what or where are the limits to our freedom. Within these limits we are " free " to choose and to act ; always bearing in mind that each act will have its own definite consequences and be followed by its own rewards or punishments, *according as we have been working against our destiny or in conformity with it*. And this constitutes the ultimate criterion whether any action is good or bad, right or wrong. And from this law there is and there can be no escape. Thus in our attempts to conform to the fiat of our destiny, and our failures to do so, we are tracing two parallel histories of our existence. Were we to write down the sum total of all the conscious, volitional efforts and doings of an individual or a community, such a record would constitute what we might call the *civil history* of that man or community. But behind that, and parallel with it, there is another as yet unwritten history—save for some few introductory chapters by Darwin and his followers—which is the *natural history* of man.

These two histories are distinct from and independent of each other. The former is a record of the doings of man, of his gropings in the dark, his errors and blunderings—on the whole, a history of guesses and failures. The latter, on the contrary, were it written intelligently, would tell the informing and enchanting tale of how out of a speck of shapeless jelly there was evolved the shapely form of man with his wonderful organization, his powers of discernment, of sensibility, of consciousness, of reason : a history of achievements and successes, as the other is full of failures and disappointments. The former is the history of " the kingdom of man," the latter is the history of " the kingdom of God."

Yet it is from this *history of errors* that modern philosophers are trying to deduce what mankind should do, even before they understand the precise nature of the problem which they have to solve. But this search

among the ruins of fruitless efforts can teach us one thing only : it can explain the reason of the almost unbroken series of failures.

Not from the *civil history*, but from the *natural history* of man, by tracing the path of evolution, may we hope to be able to deduce the nature of the problem we have to solve, as well as how to solve it.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### ANCIENT WISDOM AND MODERN SCIENCE

Why do ye not understand my speech ?—JOHN viii 43.

THE substance of the present chapter is really outside the scope of this work ; but the digression is necessary for the proper understanding of the philosophy of Jesus, and the language in which it has come down to us.

The reader could not have failed to notice how, in the course of this present inquiry into the arcana of life and conduct, certain themes and phrases which are peculiar to theology are constantly cropping up and engaging our attention. This is all the more remarkable because their intrusion here is neither premeditated nor intentional. As the reader may have gathered from the earlier chapters, the writer is far from being partial to theology, and nothing could have been further from his intention than to discuss here any distinctively theological themes, or to import into these pages the terminology of theology.

Yet, though unsought, we are persistently confronted with such questions as "What must I do to live?" (which, after all, is only a variant of "What must I do to be saved?"), and associated therewith all the problems of eschatology, such as "right conduct," "free-will," "ultimate good," "destiny," etc. ; themes which are held to belong exclusively to the domain of theology. But they come to us in a new light and with meanings so entirely novel as to make it appear doubtful whether theologians—as such—can at all be credited with their origination.

On further reflection, these doubts are resolved into the

ances of theological scholastics, but are the indistinct, almost obliterated footprints of philosophers of olden times who have been exploring in these recesses of nature. Theologians merely found these imprints, and without comprehending their meaning or understanding their signification, offered explanations of them after the manner of the faculty. The mere statement of such problems, however, betokens clear thinking and a deep insight into the secrets of nature, both of which are alien to theology.

Even as regards distinctly theistic topics, theologians have never yet risen to that detachment of mind which is indispensable for an impartial investigation, and without which a rational objective judgment on any subject is impossible. Tethered as they have at all times been to some creed or dogma, every subject has been viewed and judged from that circumscribed standpoint.

It is quite impossible, for instance, to credit theologians—always using this term in its conventional rather than in its etymological sense—with such dicta even as “God is one,” is “incomprehensible,” is “no respecter of persons,” or that the “will” or “law” of God is “immutable.” For not only are such conclusions implicit evidence of philosophic speculation, but for the most part are the opposite of what is taught by theology.

Even up-to-date Christianity is not quite free yet from the taint of polytheism; for not only does one of its cardinal doctrines postulate a “triune” deity—whatever that numerical paradox may imply—but in addition affirms the existence of an evil spirit or “devil” and a host of demi-gods and goddesses. It ascribes “attributes” to the “incomprehensible”; endeavours to alter by prayer the “immutable will” of God; and far from regarding God as no respecter of persons, special rewards are confidently promised to those who will comply with certain rituals; and on occasion the Deity is even expected to change the course of nature to please his worshippers.

These ideas and conceptions of God and the universe become cruder still the further back we trace their history, until we reach their *fons et origo* deep down in the native

ignorance of primitive man and the superstitions engendered by it. It is simply unthinkable how, from such a source, could have emanated the afore-mentioned profoundly philosophic conclusions. They betoken the philosopher rather than the curer of souls. For though the latter predominates in ancient literature, there are to be found the traces also of the former, and that no matter how far back we may choose to go.

We speak of "science" as if it were of comparatively recent origin, and think of the ancients only as steeped in ignorance and superstition. But this is a narrow view to take in face of the evidence of their often marvellous achievements. The great engineering and architectural works which they have left behind alone bear eloquent testimony to the fact that already in prehistoric times there were individuals who were capable of conceiving such bold undertakings, and laying down plans and rules for their successful execution. But such work is in itself evidence that its masters must have possessed a considerable knowledge of theoretical mechanics and mathematics.

But to realize adequately the mental heights to which some of these forgotten ancient seers could soar, we must contemplate their achievements in astronomy. Without instruments of any kind—unless devised by themselves—and without even a semblance of that methodical instruction in the principles of mechanics and mathematics—for the pioneers had to make these sciences as they were needed—which to-day is within such easy reach of everybody, they explored the heavens, mapped out the (apparent) path of the sun, located the constellations in the zodiacal belt, computed tables, calculated and foretold eclipses, centuries before the dawn of "historic times." And if only we care to remember that all this had been accomplished without help of any pre-existing literature or elaborate instruments, by men who had to grope their way in a dark and trackless labyrinth full of dangers and difficulties, and without any other guidance than that afforded by their own intellect, we

though the *masses* were steeped in ignorance—were not without their philosophers, but will have to acknowledge even that “there were giants in those days.”

The question which I desire to put and find an answer to is this: Is it rational that we should credit such minds with nothing better than the gross superstition and nonsense which is generally associated with ancient times, without making a distinction between the *thinkers*, who have always been *few*, and the *ignorant*, who are many even in our own times?

The *mass of mankind*, of course, were ignorant, credulous, and superstitious, just as are the masses of to-day—only perhaps more so; and it will be well to remember this when contrasting the “ignorance and superstition” of the past with the “science and enlightenment” of to-day. The truth is that no such comparison *en masse* of the peoples of different centuries is possible. There has never been a period, even in the halcyon days of superstition, which has not also had its students of nature, though the latter were necessarily in a hopeless minority, as they still are.

In an inquiry like the present it is necessary constantly to remember that “from the beginning” there were two main currents of thought: the one which concerned itself mainly about extracting what explanations it could from the subjective conceptions produced directly by the sense impressions; whilst the other looked behind the sensations for their causes. Let us remember also that there has always been an unbridgeable difference of outlook between these two schools of thought, and that when they met at all, it was in deadly combat. Thus only shall we be able to understand the intellectual conditions of the times, and the nature of the combat between Jesus and the Jewish hierarchy of his time.

The problems of life must necessarily have engaged the attention of mankind at a very early period; and there must have been at all times, as there are to-day, individuals gifted with extraordinary mental powers who tried to solve the mystery of the origin and destiny of the human race. Jesus was one of these. He was not the first, nor the only one. Ancient Egypt, India, China,



Persia, and peoples whose very names have been forgotten, possessed men who were *seers* in the truest and fullest sense of the word, and who have devoted their rare mental powers to solving the problem of existence. The astronomical achievements of the past show what mental efforts some of these ancients were capable of.

The difference between ancient and modern science is one of subject-matter rather than of method. The latter is bound to be the same, in essence at least, if not in form. There is only one way of studying nature, and that is by observing the sequence of events and separating—again by observation—the essential from the non-essential conditions which partake in the production of a phenomenon.

Modern science is chiefly confined to the investigation of tangible, visible, and sensible phenomena, or what is known as “natural philosophy”; whereas the ancients applied their efforts chiefly to the exploration of regions which can be reached by the mind only, where scalpel, balance, and microscope cannot be applied, and which on that account modern philosophers have declared to be beyond the reach of the human intellect. That, however, is due to misconceptions. Newton, La Place, and Darwin—to mention three names only—have shown what may be accomplished by the mind unaided by the senses, save for the abstract knowledge which can be deduced from the empirical information which they supply.

It is in these realms of the mind rather than in the sphere of action that the ancient pioneers preferred to labour. But the fruit of their toil has been all but lost to us. Theology has taken possession of it, destroyed all that was valuable, and preserved nothing but the empty husks. The dicta above cited, the eschatological phrases which have inspired this chapter, as well as such words as “karma,” “nirvana,” “metempsychosis,” and many more such, bear the impress of being final conclusions of some philosophic train of thought. But the nature of such speculation, or the line of argument on which it rested, has been lost to us, and with it the true meaning in which those words had originally been used.

One shudders to think what future generations might understand by such terms as "variation," "selection," "mimicry," "struggle for existence," "survival of the fittest," etc., if the works of competent writers on evolution were all lost and only what ignorance and superstition could read into them survived. But that is precisely what has happened with the teachings of many of the ancient sages, and with the teachings of Jesus in particular.

The object of this rapid survey of so vast a subject is to find the true place of the Sage of Nazareth in the world's history of thought, and particularly in Moral Philosophy. Attempts without number have been made to solve the mystery of Jesus, to delineate a character which shall be consistent with the records we possess of him and with a rational appreciation of what seems possible and probable; but so far without success.<sup>1</sup> But then all these attempts were based on the assumption that Jesus himself claimed to be the Messiah, and the only question which the "higher critics" (whatever this phrase may mean) have set themselves to solve was whether Jesus himself believed in the claims he is supposed to have made, or whether he was a dissembler. Not a dignified alternative, surely, in connection with a great moral teacher; and this alone should be sufficient to question the grounds on which the assumption is based. Yet nobody ever did so.

It has not occurred to anyone as yet—so far as the present writer is aware—to regard Jesus as a philosopher,

\* I base this statement on the conclusions of Albert Schweitzer, who, after an exhaustive and critical examination of the various rationalistic theories published from Reimarus (1778) to Wrede (1901), thus summarizes his "Results":—

"The Jesus of Nazareth who came forward publicly as the Messiah, who preached the ethic of the kingdom of God, who founded the kingdom of heaven upon earth, and died to give his work its final consecration, never had any existence. He is a figure designed by rationalism, endowed with life by liberalism, and clothed by modern theology in an historical garb" (*The Quest of the Historical Jesus*).

On the above I would remark by way of reply that the Sermon on the Mount and the Parable of the Last Judgment exist, neither of which could have been composed by the evangelist, which must have had an author,

and to seek deeper meanings in his utterances than what theology has assigned to them. The reason probably is that no one would think of associating a rational philosophy with an inhabitant of Judæa. What good can come out of Nazareth ? still seems to possess those who have discarded the divinity of Jesus.

It is true enough to say that the Judæa of those days could not have "produced" such a man. But neither could the Poland of the sixteenth century—nor the whole of Europe, for that matter—have "produced" a Copernicus ; or the England of the nineteenth century a Lyell or a Darwin. *Such men are never the result of the wisdom of their contemporaries*, but rather *the source of wisdom* of subsequent generations. They are prodigies of nature which appear like shining meteors in a dark sky, and by the sudden glare of the light which they shed cause alarm and commotion among those who are disturbed in their mental routine.

Such a meteor was Jesus ; and only by regarding him as such is a rational and consistent interpretation of his life, his character, his teachings, and the commotion he created among the priesthood of his time, possible.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### A TEST OF TRUTH

The son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do.—JOHN v. 19.

Refrain from these men, and let them alone for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it.—ACTS v. 38-9.

It is a truism to say that nothing happens without a cause, and that that cause is always a natural one. Nevertheless, it is necessary sometimes to remember such a truism. By it is meant that any group of conditions will be followed by certain definite results; and that identical conditions will always produce identical results. On the certainty of this belief are based all the arts and sciences, and on it depends even the reasoning faculty of man. The essence of this belief is that *there is nothing arbitrary or capricious in nature*. If there were, rational thought would be impossible.

Even when producing a phenomenon artificially, all man can do is to manipulate the conditions in accordance with what experience has taught him will lead to the desired result. In the words of Jesus, "The son can do nothing of himself, only what he seeth the Father do." This statement differs from that of modern science in its wording only. Its meaning is as clear as it is unassailable.

The first thing man has to learn, therefore, concerning anything, before he can act intelligently, is to acquaint himself with the principles which govern the phenomena he desires to control. A full knowledge of the theory of all the phenomena would be the highest wisdom attainable by man; and any idea that he can do anything contrary to these "eternal laws" is the greatest folly.

The "struggle for existence" consists in the quest of these laws. From them, as far as they are discovered, may be deduced rules for guidance, whether in respect of the physical arts or of moral conduct. Where such knowledge is wanting, man is groping in the dark, succeeding when he happens to take the right step, and failing when he errs. This is the process of mental, moral, and social evolution stated in the fewest words.

Thus all science consists of past experiences expressed in generalizations; and these generalizations are the so-called "laws" which are applied in the arts, and which enable the student to explain the phenomena of nature.

The point I desire to bring into focus so as to base an argument on it is the commonplace that *practice precedes science*. From this follows that all science must of necessity be primarily based on empiricism, and that therefore the leading facts of any group of phenomena must have been known before they could be made into a science.

From this conclusion follow several others. For one thing, the reproach against Jesus that his precepts were not original to him loses whatever importance it is supposed to possess. This question, in fact, no longer arises; for if based on the common experience of mankind—as matters relating to life and conduct are bound to be—they could not have been new. But this fact, instead of militating against the validity of his conclusions, should, on the contrary, give them additional weight. The facts of terrestrial gravitation, for instance, were common knowledge, and had been applied in many ways, centuries before Sir Isaac Newton deduced from them his theory which enabled him to explain the motions of the planets. So likewise were known the facts of variation, selection, heredity, etc., from which Charles Darwin deduced his theory of evolution, by help of which he explained the origin of species. The primary object of science is not to discover something which is unknown—although incidentally it may enable us to do so—but to explain familiar phenomena the theory of which is not yet understood. As John Stuart Mill so tersely expressed it, "In science, those who speak of explaining any phenomenon mean (or

should mean) pointing out not some more familiar, but merely some more general phenomenon of which it is a partial exemplification."

These digressions into "methods of inquiry" are unavoidable from the fact that I am treading a new path across the borderland where science and metaphysics are overlapping, often with disastrous results. It is absolutely necessary for the sake of clearness to draw a sharp line of demarcation which shall separate one from the other, before we can hope to make any real progress in Moral Philosophy.

The existing confusion is due, in part at least, to a misapprehension of the principles of science, which are too often confounded with the axioms of metaphysics; that is, they are regarded in the light of a major premise from which deductions may be made with impunity, so long as the rules of logic are adhered to. That, however, is a fallacy. The "principles" or "laws" of science are *generalizations of observed facts*, and any deduction made from them is a *hypothesis* which must be confirmed by *observation* before it can be accepted as a premise to draw further conclusions from.

It is not so with the axioms of the scholastics, who rely on logic to prove the truth of their axioms as well as of their deductions. There is still a widespread belief abroad that a truth may be discovered (or proved) by a mere process of logic. The idea is that logic, properly applied, is infallible; that if the premises are true and have been correctly stated, then the logical conclusion is bound to be true also. Hence the quest for an "absolute truth," from which it is believed an endless chain of deductions could be made, each of them as infallibly true as was the first major premise.

There never was a more fatal error than this. It is the *ignis fatuus* which has lured many a brave thinker into the bog metaphysics, there to perish without having accomplished so much as to leave behind him a stepping-stone or a fingerpost for the next explorer.

In the first place, we have no knowledge, and can have none, of the absolute. Our finite constitution precludes

such a possibility. All our knowledge is of relations only. In the second place, it does not follow that even if our premises correctly express a fact, therefore the "inevitable conclusion" must be true also. It is quite true, for instance, that water expands when heated and contracts on cooling. But it is not true that we can deduce from this anything else than just what we have actually observed. We may do so as a hypothesis; but the deduction would need verification—not by an appeal to the rules of logic, however, but by actual observation. It does not follow, for instance, that water will expand or contract indefinitely when heated or cooled, or that the ratio of expansion and contraction will be the same at whatever temperature. The fact is, that neither conclusion would be true. The ratio of expansion varies for each degree of temperature. Moreover, at  $100^{\circ}$  C. water changes quite unexpectedly and *unforeseeably* from a liquid into a gas, with entirely new properties; and on cooling the contraction comes unexpectedly to an end at  $4^{\circ}$  C., below which the water again commences to expand, and at  $0^{\circ}$  C. is changed into a solid with liberation of heat.

This erratic behaviour of water is not an exception, but is typical of what happens throughout nature. There is no such regularity in nature as would enable us to solve its mysteries by applying the rules of logic. Nature is always *consistent with itself*, but never regular in the sense required by logic or arithmetic. It knows nothing of "axioms" or "necessary truths," and heeds not the "inevitable conclusions" of our inflexible logic. Logic, by itself, can neither discover a fact in nature, nor does it enable us to deduce from already established facts what will happen under modified conditions—unless we know from previous experience what to expect.

Logic, be it remembered, is an instrument which can teach us *how to think* and *reason* correctly; just as grammar teaches us how to express our thoughts correctly. But it can neither establish a truth nor verify a conclusion. Observation alone can do that.

Had philosophers been always conscious of this simple

truth—itself abundantly verifiable by observation—many an elaborate and pretentious system would never have seen the light of day. In any case, such systems as are based on logic and supported by nothing else are not worth a moment's consideration; and that not so much because they are based on hypotheses, but *because their conclusions are unverifiable*.

A philosophy based on the actualities of life will be traceable in the phenomena to which it relates. We should be able to see its principles at work, producing just the phenomena the theory is trying to explain; and any legitimate deduction from its principles should be verifiable.

I propose here and now to submit the rival philosophies of Jesus and of Paul, which are typical of the two dominant schools of thought, to a test which was suggested by a wise Pharisee of the name of Gamaliel in the early days of Christianity. When some of the "apostles" of the new faith were tried for heresy before the Sanhedrin, this Gamaliel counselled to leave them alone. For, he said, "if this counsel or this work is of men, it will come to nought, but if of God, ye cannot overthrow it." Which is perfectly true. For, making due allowance for the phraseology of the time, it means that man can neither create nor suppress a "principle" or "law" of nature; and that therefore, no matter what he does, he cannot alter the course of nature.

As this judgment was delivered some eighteen centuries ago, and both philosophies have been on trial ever since, it will be interesting to submit them to this crucial test.

Let us begin with Paul. His philosophy had all the support that human wit could suggest, or sword and fire could enforce. The best scholarship has busied itself for eighteen centuries to explain such difficulties as were allowed to be pointed out; whilst to question any of the cardinal doctrines was punished capitally. Moreover, it was to the interest of everybody to be "a follower of Christ." The mere suspicion of scepticism was enough to affect prejudicially any waverer. Every consideration, every humanly created agency or tendency, has worked



on behalf of Paul's system of faith, until it has become not merely a national institution, but an established habit of thought.

Yet, notwithstanding all this material, mental, and moral support, "the counsel of Paul" has come to nought. Indeed, at no time was it more than a belief, and could affect men's lives in the same way only as a belief concerning their origin could affect the real process of transmission or heredity. It is a philosophy detached from the realities of life. At no point was there any contact, or any linking up between theory and fact. It was built on faith, and remained a faith. People professed it, fought and died for it—as is the case with other systems of faith—but at no time was it more than a disturbing element in the process of evolution. Else how could it ever have resulted in the universal scepticism of to-day?

On the other hand, the precepts of Jesus have never yet been accepted as a practicable philosophy of life. Their high ethical standard, forsooth, is admitted universally, but only as a theory of no practical value. The Golden Rule has never yet met with recognition in any system of social philosophy or statecraft. And although we find it in the Gospels, it has never been more than a stumbling-block to Christian preachers. It certainly has never formed an essential part of Christianity. No doctrine or dogma is based on it, and its observance has never been deemed as essential to salvation. Indeed, the Rule was disregarded nowhere more than by the different sects in their internecine quarrels. At no time would a plea on behalf of a condemned heretic that, although he disbelieved this or that dogma, he faithfully observed all the injunctions of Jesus, have saved him from martyrdom.

But apart from church or creed, all down the centuries, from the earliest times, man has been accustomed to distrust his neighbour. We are doing so to-day. The chief concern of nations is to protect—or to defend—themselves against the sinister intentions of their neighbours. A similar spirit—though in a lesser degree—inspires the thoughts of the individual members of each nation, and gives direction to their *conscious, purposive*

*acts*; each person seeing in his neighbour, if not an aggressor, at least a competitor for the means of life.

"Love thy neighbour as thyself" has never yet been accepted as a guiding principle by either State or Church. It has never yet been urged seriously as an argument against war, against customs barriers, against racial or sectarian conflicts, or commercial rivalries. As a practical precept it has never met with anything but ridicule or derision.

How comes it then that mankind, inspired by a spirit which fosters distrust and enmity, have nevertheless evolved a social state based on principles which are the opposite of what their philosophy teaches? How is it that notwithstanding the many barriers raised by State and Church, race and nationality, all calculated to keep the peoples apart, mankind has become, and in spite of wars is becoming, more and more international and inter-dependent?

Clearly there are agencies at work directing the evolution of man which are not dreamt of in our philosophies.

Notwithstanding all the disturbing and disruptive human agencies, people are getting more neighbourly every day. Sectarians are becoming more tolerant, notwithstanding their narrow, exclusive creeds. Nations are becoming more friendly, notwithstanding the often aggressive policy of their governments, or even occasional actual warfare. Business is being conducted more and more on principles which beget mutual confidence even among competitors, notwithstanding that material gain is considered the essence of success in business. Even in our treatment of criminals—the "enemies" of society—there is a marked tendency towards obeying one of the most derided injunctions of Jesus, viz. "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you."

We are getting more forbearing and forgiving, more neighbourly, more brotherly, more humane; in short, more "civilized" as it is called, and that, let it be remembered, contrary to accepted standards of philosophy.

To sum up, just as every possible human effort has

been made to establish the philosophy of Paul, so everything has been done to oppose that of Jesus. Yet—once more adapting the words of Gamaliel—*the former has come to nought and the latter could not be overthrown.*

The explanation is a simple one. The injunctions of Jesus, far-fetched, impracticable, and sometimes even nonsensical *as they seem*, are not human inventions at all, but *rules deduced from nature*; just as are the theories of Newton, of Darwin, of Lyell, or as is any theory which deals with actualities and is deduced from the phenomena to which it relates.

His precepts *seem* absurd. But was there ever a new theory published which did not? And the philosophy of Jesus is still new, because it has never yet been listened to.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### THE "SAYINGS" OF JESUS

Falsch Gebild und Wort, verandern Sinn und Ort—GOETHE.

Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat and swallow a camel.—  
MATT. xxiii. 24.

EVERYBODY recognizes the high moral tone of the precepts of Jesus. Everybody admits their inherent self-evident truth (with, perhaps, some notable exceptions to be dealt with later on). Everybody concedes that if universally carried out their purpose would be attained. But—it is alleged—they are impracticable; their very perfection makes them inapplicable to the affairs of imperfect man.

But perfection is a fault of every true theory. It attaches to the multiplication table no less than to every theory of the physical sciences. Equally true is it that imperfect man can seldom—if ever—apply a theory in practice with theoretical exactness. Yet, unless the theory itself is perfect, it is of no use at all. But, if true, it will enable a person to foresee what is attainable, or how any desired result could be achieved.

Nobody having a knowledge of the principles of chemistry would nowadays waste his time in trying to effect the transmutation of metals; nor would anybody who understands mechanics attempt to contrive perpetual motion. On the other hand, it would not discourage any man to construct, say, a power engine because he could not apply the mechanical principles with mathematical exactitude nor obtain from his engine the full theoretical power.

In connection with the physical sciences such reflections seem commonplace. But in moral philosophy it is still necessary to emphasize these elementary truths. It is

because of the absence of recognized principles that hitherto the construction of a moral science has been impossible of attainment. And it is because of the absence of reliable criteria—which only a science can supply—that mankind are still floundering in the dark concerning matters of conduct.<sup>1</sup>

The first question concerning any theory or principle is not whether, or how far, it is attainable in practice, but whether it is true. If true, there is bound to be a means of applying it; indeed, it cannot then be evaded without corresponding consequences.

This was the contention of Jesus when he warned mankind that unless they heeded the principles which he enunciated they would be building on sand. To this extent his prediction has come true. We certainly cannot claim to have built upon a rock. Society is tottering, is being shaken to its foundations by every passing storm. There is security for neither individuals nor nations.

Negatively at least, the Sage of Nazareth has also proved to be right in his insistence that there was no other road to salvation than "the strait and narrow way" which he marked out by his "sayings." So far, at least, none has been discovered.

May he not have been right also when he so positively claimed that observance of what the English Bible describes as "sayings," but what the Teacher himself proclaimed as eternal and immutable laws, would establish the much-desired "peace on earth and goodwill towards man"? May there not be after all something more behind these embarrassing "sayings" than what appears on the surface, or than what priestcraft has been able to read into them?

Mankind has been discussing many things these nineteen hundred years. People have disputed, quarrelled, and fought—both metaphorically and actually—about doctrines, vestments, candles, wafers, chalices, and many other such senseless frivolities. They have killed each

<sup>1</sup> I use the word "conduct" to include all that is designated by "moral sciences," and for which J. S. Mill proposed the term "ethology."

other by the thousands and tens of thousands in their frantic efforts to establish "peace and goodwill." It is in the avowed interest of "a lasting peace" that Christian nations are killing each other by thousands daily even while these pages are being written, but so far without any result, and without confident hope or prospect of any such result. Indeed, the vast majority of people are resigned that there is no way out of this calamity. "It has always been thus, and always will be so," is their comment.

In view of all this, is it not time that we examined these despised and ridiculed "sayings" a little more closely? Is it not just possible that the Teacher whose negative predictions have come true, may have been right after all when he said that the only way to end war is to put up the sword; that goodwill is bound to follow when nobody is any longer disposed to quarrel; that the way to make an end to strife is to do away with the temptations which lead to it; and that the only sure way to get rid of an enemy is to befriend him?

These counsels *may* be impracticable; but the alleged absurdity is certainly not so apparent as to justify the contempt with which they are brushed aside by statesmen and reformers. Let us at least try to understand them; for, after what we have so far learnt about the channels through which these teachings have come to us, we cannot be certain whether we have correctly apprehended the Teacher's meanings. His precepts and injunctions are evidently final conclusions of a long train of reasoning. But of the latter we know next to nothing, and of the former only what has been transmitted by doctrinaires and dogmatists. And we have seen what little reliance can be placed in these, especially concerning anything relating to the historical Jesus or his genuine utterances. Moreover, the object of scholars and "divines" was not to find any meanings in the "ethics" of Jesus, but rather to get rid of them, since they have ever proved the greatest stumbling-block to their creeds.

Let us then examine these precepts as a theory deserving serious attention should be examined. Let us begin with

the Golden Rule, which is the pivot of the philosophy of Jesus. If it is a mere sentiment, we shall find but little connection between it and the realities of life. But if, on the contrary, it is a true generalization from actualities, a *rule* deduced from the phenomena of social inter-relations, then we should be able to discover it in and behind every social phenomenon which makes for progress, or what is broadly called "civilization."

As we have seen, "Love thy neighbour as thyself" is one of those precepts which summarizes a common experience of mankind. In a previous chapter I have shown how its observance was enforced by necessity long before its meaning had been translated into words. Its great antiquity, therefore, is beyond question. But what does it precisely mean?

Stripped of every trace of mere sentimentalism, and translated into modern phraseology, it means neither more nor less than *respect for the rights of others*—our "neighbours." This principle—for such it is—is the origin of civilization and the foundation of organized society. Without it the social *State* is impossible, unthinkable. *Equity, honour, justice*, and all that mankind have learnt to regard as the highest virtues, have no meaning apart from this basic principle.

"Love thy neighbour as thyself," therefore, far from being an impracticable idealism, is actually the foundation of every State, of civilization itself; and the soundness and stability of any State can be shown to be directly proportional to the recognition of this basic principle in its laws and institutions. It is the creative as well as the controlling power of "society"—using the word in its widest sense. It is the bond which unites people in common fellowship. *Its alternative is brute force.*

Once a principle like this is recognized as such, it is no longer a question whether it is "practicable" or not; but—in the first place—how far we dare deviate from it without risking utter ruin; and in the second, how we might be able to comply with its requirements. *For there can be no sound or stable social organization where this principle of "rights of neighbours" is set at naught.*

Now, here we have a deduction for verification, and all the facts of history to serve us in lieu of experiments. The task of doing so I must leave, however, to the reader. The necessary limitations of this essay will allow me to do no more than to present two extreme examples by way of illustration. One of these is an ideal society—analogous to the "perfect gas" or "perfect engine" assumed by physicists to illustrate a principle—a community the members of which are all on a social and political equality, and where there is no aggressor. Then, by way of contrast, let us think of a horde of human beings to whom every freedom and every human right is denied—say a gang of chattel slaves domineered by a pirate chief. One thing is already apparent in the latter example, even without any analysis. We could not call such a mob a "community," "society," "nation," or "state." Whether chattel slavery itself is right or wrong is not now under consideration, and hence the question does not arise. Nor need we now discuss whether it is right or expedient for one man, or a group of men, to enjoy privileges which are denied to others. All I wish to insist on is that just in so far as the principle of "equal rights and duties"—which is the Golden Rule—is departed from, to that extent are we removed from the ideal social state, and *vice versa*.

Another deduction from these reflections is that the evolution of society, or "the march of civilization," is *towards* this ideal society. This we can see not only by contrasting civilized society with savagedom, but also in all the struggles of mankind. The concessions of those in power, from the absolutist potentate to the elected chief of State, as well as the demands of the people ruled over, are all in the direction of the ideal of Jesus when he said, "Call no man master upon earth, for one is your master, the Father which is in heaven, and *all ye are brethren*."

So much, then, for the truth of the central doctrine on which Jesus relied.



## CHAPTER XXXIV

### THE "SAYINGS" OF JESUS (*continued*)

He also that received the seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful—**MATT xiii. 22**

And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter the kingdom of God—**LUKE xviii. 24.**

What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?—**MARK viii. 36**

It is a peculiarity of a truth in nature that once it is recognized it can be seen where formerly it had never been suspected. Variation, adaptation to conditions, and the resultant "selection" or "survival" of certain forms are cases in point. At first all these observations were disputed, the conclusion drawn from them denied, and the theory of evolution in which they culminated ridiculed and rejected. But to-day we cannot look at a growing animal or plant without the elements of evolution staring us in the face. And yet the facts were not new when Darwin published his epoch-making work. The influence of conditions on growth were well known. The author of Genesis actually tells us how Jacob tried to produce variation artificially in Laban's flock of sheep. Jeremiah speaks of "the teeth of the children being set on edge because their grandparents have eaten sour grapes." Plato points out that a man having two mares would select the better one to breed from.

In fact, the leading principles on which the theory of evolution was based were all applied in practice, though, of course, not to the same extent or with the same intelligence as has been the case since Darwin explained their functions in the economy of life.

Nevertheless, these facts, which to-day are so obvious as to be regarded as self-evident, had to be pointed out ; and it has been no small struggle to establish their truth in face of the opposition with which their enunciation has been met.

The ground of the opposition was not that the facts on which Darwin based his generalizations were not demonstrable, or that his deductions were not verifiable, but—*because the conclusions to which they led conflicted with accepted beliefs!* It was for the same reason that Galileo had to renounce the Copernican theory, and that we have heard so much about the "conflicts between science and religion."

Great as has been this opposition of established beliefs to the progress of the physical sciences, it is as nothing compared to the opposition which vested interests have always offered to the social and moral sciences. The only kind of philosophy which is acceptable is one which confirms existing customs and institutions—or which at least does not menace them. This is the criterion by which new theories have been tested all these untold centuries by those in whose interest it was to do so, and who had the power—if necessary—to oppose revolutionary doctrines. The truth of such theories or their effect on mankind, whether they were beneficent or otherwise, did not matter at all. Two many-headed monsters, named respectively Heresy and Sedition, kept incessant and vigilant watch at the wide gate of Mammon ; and anyone who dared to point out the dangers which lay beyond was mercilessly destroyed.

It was for this reason that Jesus was persecuted, as were so many other prophets before and since his time. It was for this reason that his precepts have never received from serious writers the attention which their obvious and inherent truth seems to demand. For—

Wer darf das Kind beim rechten Namen nennen ?  
Die Wenigen, die was davon erkannt,  
Die thöricht g'nug ihr volles Herz nicht wahrten,  
Dem Pöbel ihr Gefühl, ihr Sehen offenbarten,  
Hat man von jeh gekreuzigt und verbrannt.—GOETHE.

The ethics of Jesus strike too mercilessly at the two root-evils, *power* and *wealth*, from which spring most of the ills which beset human society. They are the two great temptations which lure the mass of mankind to their destruction.

These circumstances create great difficulties not only to the social reformer, but also to the moral philosopher, of whom it is expected that he should confine his doctrines within the limits sanctioned by convention, if not actually defined by law. This puts the moral philosopher at a great disadvantage as compared with the physicist. The latter may point to certain physical phenomena to illustrate a theory or to verify a deduction without falling under the suspicion of being heretic or traitor. Yet no theory can be proved without reference to actual facts; and the social or moral philosopher—unless his philosophy is to be a mere sham—is bound to take his illustrations from actual life.

My appeal to the reader is not to prejudge a theory because it may seem contrary to what he believes to be right. For that is just the matter under discussion: *What is right?* Whatever restrictions it may be thought necessary to impose on the *reformer* must not be imposed also on the *philosopher*. The latter must be as free as the mathematician, if his labour is to be of any value. Let the reader remember that it is a *theory* we are now considering and not a Reform Bill.

If, in the course of the presentation of it, I have to allude to existing social institutions, it is because such references are unavoidable, and I do so for illustration only. And if sometimes a cherished custom or institution should appear of doubtful value when placed in juxtaposition with some of the precepts of Jesus, let the reader reflect that this does not necessarily prove the absurdity of the latter.

I believe I have shown to demonstration that the basic principle of the philosophy of the Golden Rule is unassailable. It is to moral philosophy what gravitation is to the physical universe; and to sociology what evolution is to the organic world. Without it neither the one nor the other is thinkable.

Of such a theory we shall expect to be able to trace its elements in the activities and inter-relations of mankind; just as the principle of gravitation enters into almost every physical phenomenon, and the elements of evolution are traceable in organic nature. That is actually the case, as has already been shown in a general way in the last two chapters. To the arguments there presented I will add yet another one of the same general kind, before entering on a detailed examination of the several precepts.

The object is to show how these precepts permeate our social life, and how they are coming more and more into vogue as civilization is advancing; and *per contra*, how civilization is progressing in proportion as these precepts enter into our social relations.

Let us once more think of two ideal societies; one representing the Utopia of Jesus, and the other its opposite. It is not difficult to imagine two such societies. On a small scale we can sometimes see actual examples of either.

First, then, let us think of a society such as we are acquainted with, and which, therefore, is the opposite of what, according to the precepts of Jesus, it should be: a society where people are solicitous about the future; where encroachments of any kind are resented; and where it is considered natural for people to try "to get even" with an opponent. An extreme representation of such conditions may be pictured by thinking of a distribution to a hungry crowd of only a limited number of loaves of bread, under conditions where each is to help himself to as much as he can and as best he can.

The rushing, crushing, pushing, trampling, snatching, grabbing, and fighting that is bound to ensue under such conditions can easily be imagined. Everybody would be trying to get for himself as much as he can, regardless of the needs of others or the consequences. That is practically the system under which the human family has started the race for life; and the *habit* of it has survived to this day.

Next let us think of an ideal society in which all this

is reversed ; where everybody is concerned about the welfare of those around him, regardless of consequences to himself. The nearest mental realization of such a state would be an entertainment, or a reception, given by a wealthy person to his well-to-do friends. Here we shall behold the opposite of what we saw in the former picture. Instead of pushing and grabbing, the guests would be waiting upon each other, handing the proffered refreshments to their neighbours before touching any themselves, and politely standing aside to allow others to pass, even though it may be to the buffet where the good things are dispensed.

In such an assembly the people who are the best behaved, and whose manners are most admired, are just those whose conduct would come nearest to the ideal of "the Galilean Peasant"—as Jesus has sometimes sneeringly been described.

I fancy I can hear the objection that we could not carry our drawing-room manners into our business affairs. That may or may not be so, but it does not concern us for the moment. My present object is to convey a clear idea of the kind of society which would meet the demands made by the ethics of Jesus ; and to show that, however impracticable such a system may be deemed to be, it is not one that is unthinkable or theoretically impossible.

We need not confine ourselves to the banquets of the rich for illustrations. The same underlying principles may be seen at work in many ways, for they permeate society. To pass from the imaginary to the actual, let us contemplate two sets of passengers on one of the ocean steamers, one in the saloon and the other in the steerage, sitting down to dinner. Although in this case the people are paying for their meals, the same spirit of mutual politeness and absence of aggression would prevail in both classes ; and anyone eager to help himself in advance of his neighbour would be regarded as wanting in good manners. That is, *so long as there was enough to go round, and to spare*. But if there were not a sufficient supply, an anxiety would manifest itself which might lead to a scramble for the means of life ; when the veneer of

artificial culture is not always sufficient to mark the distinction which is observable sometimes between passengers of the saloon and the steerage respectively. In such circumstances conventions are, as a rule, set aside, and a sterner law asserts itself.

Thus we may observe everywhere in society principles at work which have led mankind from brute savagedom to a state of civilization and high culture, principles for which people are groping, but fail to recognize when presented to them as cut-and-dried precepts.

## CHAPTER XXXV

### "THE SOURCE OF ALL EVIL"

There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely riches kept for the owners thereof to their own hurt—ECCLES v 13.

He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase—Ibid v. 10.

For where your treasure is, there will be your heart also, . . . Ye cannot serve two masters; ye cannot serve God and Mammon—JESUS.

THE outstanding lesson of the last chapter is that it is *want* which brutalizes man; and that it is the *fear of want* which is the primary cause of the race after riches, with all its attendant evils.

I shall not waste time in trying to prove by argument such obvious facts. The scrambling for riches has no meaning apart from providing for possible future needs; and although the desire for hoarding is almost universal, it is nevertheless true that this inclination is but the morbid exaggeration of a habit which has been established through force of circumstances.

There is a feeling of insecurity, a fear about the future, which impels people to hoard riches far in excess of any possible needs, often to their own hurt, and generally to the detriment of the common welfare. People are not content with merely making sure of their daily bread, and to trust that they will always be able to do so, but are solicitous to make provision for the distant future, far ahead of what seems necessary or reasonable; and that not for themselves only, but for their children and for their children's children, as if fearsome that the natural sources of supply might cease to be forthcoming.

Whether this anxiety to provide for future generations is necessary, or how far it is justified by experience, may be a matter for argument. But it is not at all doubtful

whether we should make provision for the immediate future, for old age, or for the young who are not yet able to provide for themselves. Common sense teaches us to do so, and necessity commands it. We must lay in stores of food to last at least until the next harvest. We must look ahead to provide raiment; for we must prepare the ground, sow the seed, extract the fibre, prepare it, spin it into yarn, and weave the cloth before it can be made available for clothing. Nor is it possible to provide shelter from day to day; it must be prepared ahead, and with an eye to the future as regards durability.

How then shall we reconcile with these obvious, common-sense conclusions the "command" or "injunction" attributed to Jesus not to take thought for the morrow, what we shall eat, or wherewithal we shall clothe ourselves?

The answer is that it cannot be done. The advice as it stands in the English translation (for it is *not* to be found in the Greek texts), and as it has been interpreted by "divines," is absurd, and if followed would lead to disaster. We cannot dispense with making provision for the future without risk of being faced with a famine; and such actual and acute distress is hardly calculated to make people better, saintlier, or more solicitous for the welfare of their neighbours. Rather would it mean the brutalizing of mankind, a transition to the feral state.

The passage "Take no thought for the morrow," as it stands in the A.V., as it has been interpreted, and as it is generally quoted detached from the context, must be pronounced to be sheer nonsense. But we must not burden the Sage of Galilee with it, for he never uttered such an absurdity. That it should be found in the Bible, and so taught by the Churches, is only another glaring illustration of the utter incompetence of "divines" to deal rationally with the simplest matters in connection with Bible, Jesus, or religion.

The Churches themselves prove the folly and impracticability of the supposed "divine injunction" when—after the preacher has explained the sinfulness of "taking thought for the morrow," or of "touching filthy lucre"—the collecting-box is sent round!



Jesus was too much concerned about a rational conduct of life to enjoin what on the face of it is irrational, impracticable and stupid. All the duties which he taught related to the mundane affairs of mankind, or what the Churches are pleased to stigmatize as "secular." "The blessed of the Father" were those who fed the hungry, clothed the naked, sheltered the destitute, tended the sick, and had compassion on those who were afflicted: all of them offices which, but for thrift and forethought, it would be impossible to perform. The object-lesson which Jesus gave to the heckling lawyer, in the famous Parable of Priest and Samaritan, is itself a sufficient disproof of the imputation that Jesus could have enjoined anything so irrational. For, let it be noted that Jesus represented the Samaritan not merely as attending to the immediate wants of the sufferer, but also as making provision "*for the morrow,*" *and the days following the morrow*, by leaving some money behind for contingent expenses, and a promise to pay in case the provision should prove insufficient.<sup>1</sup>

Such thoughts as are implied by the supposed injunction are quite incompatible with the character, the life, or the teachings of Jesus. He was neither a recluse nor an ascetic, as one who "took no thought for the morrow" would be of necessity. Quite the contrary: he rebuked people for austerity, bade them anoint themselves and be of cheerful countenance even when fasting. As for himself, he attended wedding-feasts, is reported to have accepted a gift of precious ointment, and was denounced by his enemies as "a glutton and a wine-bibber."

Moreover, the blunder—provided it is nothing worse than that—is to be found in the translation only. In the R.V. an attempt has been made to eliminate the apparent absurdity by substituting "Be not therefore anxious for the morrow," but the correction is a half-hearted one, and does not sufficiently meet the case.

<sup>1</sup> See also the parable about talents (Matt. xxv. 27), where Jesus actually condemned the man who buried his talent instead of thinking about the future.

There are many errors and mistranslations in the discourse to which this perplexing passage belongs ; and they seem all of them so purposeful and directed towards one common end, that it is difficult to get rid of the impression that they must have been introduced intentionally, with the deliberate purpose of obscuring the obvious meaning of the discourse, so as to conceal the discrepancy between the common-sense teachings of Jesus and that of dogmatic (or "spiritual") Christianity.

This time the conflict was not between rival dogmatists, nor between science and religion ; but between religion and faith, between Jesus and Christianity. The task before the learned divines, therefore, was a difficult one. It was not how to elucidate, but how to mystify, so as to protect the "faith" against the embarrassing doctrines of Jesus. It is for this reason that an otherwise perfectly clear—if concise—representation of what we shall presently see are obvious truisms has twisted into incoherent and unintelligible nonsense, which, whilst concealing unwelcome truths, affords unlimited scope to preachers for the exercise of their exegetic genius.

In the first place, we must challenge the translation of several words and phrases.

Let us commence with the words "Take no thought for the morrow."

The Greek word which has been rendered (A.V.) "taking thought"—a phrase, by the way, which seems to have been specially invented to meet the needs of the case, for nowhere else, and in no other connection, is it used in the English language—is "*merimnaō*," and has been translated in other parts of the N.T., and also in this Gospel, by "*care*." Here are two such passages, one from Matthew's and one from Luke's Gospel, in either of which the true meaning of the word may be readily inferred from the context —

He also that received the seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word ; and the *care* of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word . . ." (Matt. xiii. 22.)

Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and *cares* of this life . . . (Luke xxi. 34).

In both these passages the unmistakable meaning of the word is "worry" or "anxiety"; and that, indeed, is the rendering given in the dictionaries. It is not easy to see, therefore, why the translators should have found it necessary to invent a new phrase which is alien to the English and unknown in the Greek language, except for the purpose of obscuring the clear meaning of the original text.

The word in its different grammatical forms recurs about twenty-five times throughout the New Testament, and is rendered (in the A.V.) fourteen times by "care" and eleven times by "taking thought."

But in each case the context shows the connotations of the word to be "worry" or "anxiety," and *never* "forethought," which the phrase "taking thought for the morrow" is intended to suggest.

Let it be noted also in passing that neither the word "worry" nor "anxiety" is to be found in the A.V., although in the passages above quoted one or other would render the original meaning of "*merimnaō*" more faithfully than "care." "Thought" is not admissible at all; and "taking thought"—to say the least of it—is misleading.

Then there are the words "for the morrow," which obviously refer to "the future." We thus get as alternative, more accurate, and more rational renderings of this perplexing passage "Do not worry about the future," or "Do not be anxious about the future"; either of which is capable of quite a different interpretation—especially in connection with the context—to that which is suggested by the words "Take no thought for the morrow."

Indeed, in this corrected form, and read in connection with the rest of the discourse, from which it is inseparable, the passage does not refer to forethought at all, but to the *fear* or *anxiety about the future* which is the root-cause of the feverish desire to amass riches by almost any means which circumstances will permit, often even at the sacrifice of peace of mind, and all that which Jesus meant by "the service of God."

It is this spectre of *the fear about the future* which Jesus

tried to exorcise, by showing that such fear was not justified; that the uncertainty of the future was not because the bounty of the heavenly Father could not be depended upon, but because of unjust human laws and faulty social conditions.

The points of the discourse (which begins with verse 19 and runs to the end of the chapter) may be summarized as follows:—

1. The hoarding of riches is no sure safeguard against possible future want; for not only are material things perishable, but there is always the menace of "thieves"—that is, of people who are bent on the same errand. (In the current language of our own time, there are the "ups and downs" of fortune-hunters.)

2. Such hoarding of treasure—or, in current speech, "the amassing of wealth"—is in itself productive of many evils, e.g. greed, avarice, covetousness, leading to all manner of temptations and crime; for "where your treasure is, there will be your heart also."

3. Under equitable conditions—i.e. "the reign of justice" (rendered in the A.V. as "kingdom of righteousness")—such hoarding would not be necessary, since the heavenly Father always provides sufficiently for the needs of his creatures. "Consider the fowls of the air: they sow not, neither do they gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. How much more *you who know how to sow and how to gather into barns*,<sup>1</sup> O ye of little faith?"

<sup>1</sup> This is an interpretation rather than a literal translation of the original text. The sentence in question (Matt. vi 26) has been rendered in the A.V. "Are ye not *much better* ("mállon diapherete") than they?" and in the R.V. "Are not ye of *much more value* than they?" But should be rendered, "Are ye not *much more capable* than they?" Obviously neither moral worth nor personal merit could affect the "provision made by the Father," and nowhere did Jesus imply or hint any such absurdity. But he did say that "The sun shines, and the rain descends on the just and on the unjust," and that God is kind "even to the unthankful and the evil." It is simply stupid to argue that "because man is better than a bird, therefore he has even less reason to sow or to gather into barns." But it is quite a different thing to say that "inasmuch as birds are fed, though they neither sow nor reap, there is less reason for anxiety about the future for those *who are so much more capable than birds*; i.e. who know how to raise crops and how to garner them.

4. "Therefore I say unto you, do not worry about the future, what ye shall eat or drink, or wherewithal ye shall be clothed; but seek ye first . . ."

What?

The answer is contained in verse 33, which is the pivot of the whole discourse, and *not* the passage to which translators and commentators have given such notoriety. It was for the purpose of concealing the plain directions given in this verse that the whole text had to be garbled, and that the reassuring words not to worry have been twisted into an absurd and impossible commandment. But to see all this it will be necessary once more to revise the translation.

The reading of the first part of this verse in the A.V. is, "But seek ye first the *kingdom of God and his righteousness . . .*"; which has been altered in the R.V. to "But seek ye first *his kingdom and his righteousness . . .*"

This correction is remarkable not because of any difference in meaning (for there is none), but as showing that the Revisers were not averse to making free with the text itself, and yet, whilst making the paltry alteration in the reading, did not find any fault with the translation, albeit it is but a travesty of the original text.<sup>1</sup>

The two words to which objection must be taken are "kingdom" and "righteousness." With the former word I have already dealt more than once. As used by Jesus it always meant "reign," "governance," or "rule," and should have been so rendered; for there is not the remotest reference here to a "kingdom" either on earth or in the clouds.

The objection to the word "righteousness" is of a

<sup>1</sup> "It is stated in the preface to their Revision that they did not esteem it within their province to construct a continuous and complete Greek text. They adopted, however, a large number of readings which deviated from the text presumed to underlie the Authorized Version" (E. Palmer, in his preface to the Greek Testament, new edition). I have italicized the few words so as to direct attention to the fact, not commonly known to laymen, that there is no "continuous and complete Greek text" of the N.T. in existence, except what has been constructed by compilers, commentators, translators, or revisers; and that these did not shrink from altering the text whenever they deemed it advisable to do so.

similar kind. It has a sepulchral flavour, and connotes theological ideas which are not traceable in the original Greek. The word "*dikaionē*," for which it stands, means "justice," and nothing else; as the reader may satisfy himself by consulting any Greek dictionary. It is derived from "*dikaos*," which means *just*. Other words from the same root are "*dikastes*" = "judge"; "*dikē*" = "judgment" or "sentence"; and with the negative prefix *a* we get "*adika*" = "wrong"; "*adikēma*" = "evil-doing" or "iniquity"; "*adikos*" = "unjust"; and so on.

Now, it might be argued that "righteousness" means right-doing, and therefore may be substituted for "justice"; just as "kingdom" may be substituted for "reign." But that would be merely another misleading quibble; for it is not the etymology of a word which conveys its meaning, but the connotations which custom and usage have imparted to it. And theology has given meanings to these two words in particular which now are inseparable from the doctrines to indicate which they have been coined.

If the reader will consult any dictionary he will find that the various definitions which are given of "righteousness" may all be summed up in the single word "piety"; which again means conforming to the ordinances of some creed, and can in no sense be regarded as synonymous with "justice."

But, after all, "the proof of the pudding is in the eating"; and we need only compare the interpretation which has actually been given to the passage with a correct translation of it, in order to see that the words "kingdom" and "righteousness" convey meanings which are altogether different from "reign" and "justice."

Here are the two renderings side by side, with the rest of the verse added:—

But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness	But seek ye first to establish ("sētēō") the reign of justice
---	--

*and all these things will be added unto you.*

The one version suggests piety which will be rewarded in a hereafter; whereas the other requires *justice* here on earth, where also will be reaped the rewards. For, of course, "all these things" which were to be "added" unto other blessings referred to the *necessaries of life*—i.e. food and raiment—which were needed *here and now*.

Throughout the discourse the translation is so worded as to convey the idea that Jesus regarded poverty and self-abnegation as virtues and the "hankering after worldly goods" as sinful. This is especially manifest in verse 32, where the Greek word "*ethnē*" has been rendered "Gentiles," instead of "people."

To see the change of meaning which has been effected by this substitution, verses 31 and 32 must be read together:—

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? *For after all these things do the Gentiles seek.*

The suggestion here is clearly that *Gentiles* only—i.e. irreligious, impious heathen—are capable of such sin, and that no pious, God-fearing person would think of doing so.

Now, the absurdity of the suggestion is on the face of it. For "all these things," as is manifest, were *food* and *raiment* (or *the necessities of life*, which in the very next sentence, we are told, the heavenly Father "*knoweth that ye have need of*"); and it is sheer nonsense, therefore, to suggest that "Gentiles" only are concerned as to where their next meal is to come from, or that it is sinful to be so concerned.

The fact is that the word "Gentiles" has no business there at all. The Greek word so rendered is "*ethnē*," the plural of "*ethnos*," which—according to any dictionary the reader may consult—means "nation," "people," or "multitude"; that is, "masses of people living together." And as there is nothing in the context to suggest that the word here referred to non-Jews only—as does the Hebrew word "*Go'im*," which is the equivalent of the Greek word "*barbaroi*," i.e. "foreigners"—the rendering of it by "Gentiles" instead of "people"

is not only uncalled for, but an unwarranted and deliberate corruption of the text.

It must be clear to the reader by now that what Jesus deprecated was not that people should "seek these things"—i.e. the necessities of life—but *the manner* in which people thought to make sure of them; i.e. by hoarding.

The argument is that the heavenly Father's bounty can always be depended on, and that the "people are anxious about these things" because of the uncertainties due to human folly; that under equitable conditions—i.e. the *reign of justice*—such anxiety need no longer exist. "*Therefore* I say unto you, Do not fret about the future . . . *but seek ye first to establish the reign of justice,*" then all your worries will be at an end, and the things about which you are so anxious will be *added* unto you.

"Do not, therefore, worry about the future, but let the future take care of itself. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof."

I will make yet another correction. Even apart from the mistranslations, the passage "Take no thought for the morrow" is almost invariably quoted detached from the context, omitting the word "*therefore*" with which it is always introduced, and which omission constitutes a misquotation even according to the corrupted English version. For without the "*therefore*" the words have the form and meaning of an injunction, forbidding—or, at any rate, deprecating—the making of provision for the future; whereas with it the passage is shown to be the concluding part of an argument, the nature and object of which we now understand.



## CHAPTER XXXVI

### "THE SOURCE OF ALL EVIL" (*continued*)

The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender—PROV. xxii. 7.

He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want—Ibid. v. 16.

Woe unto you who join house to house and field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth.—ISA. v. 8.

For they bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.—MATT. xxiii. 4

JESUS did not—as theologians would have us believe—descant on the blessings of poverty or the sinfulness of sowing and gathering into barns—none but a fool could do so—but discoursed on the evils of a system which was based on wrong conceptions and false assumptions.

His theme (in the discourse under review) was the eternal problem of the oppression of the many by the few : a problem which was hoary with age already in those far-off times,<sup>1</sup> and which, nevertheless, is still the most burning question of the present day. "The poor ye have always with you," and the question to which Jesus tried to find an answer was not—as is the case with most *soi-disant* reformers—what to do with them, but *how to eliminate from the social organization the conditions which produces them.*

For let it be noted that Jesus never prescribed remedies—so called—but always sought to find the *cause* of the evil, and then proposed to choke it off at its source. With his postulates ever present in his mind that "Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit," he did not fall into the error,

<sup>1</sup> See quotations at the head of this and the preceding chapter.

so common among students of social problems, of mistaking the *symptoms* for the *malady*, and then try to combat the evil by palliating the effects which result from it. His contention was for *preventives*, and not for palliatives. There can be no "remedy" to correct the evil of the fruit which is brought forth by a corrupt tree. You cannot gather figs of thorns, nor grapes of thistles. Therefore the only way of combating an evil is to destroy the source whence it springs; or, in the metaphor of the Teacher, "Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."

Jesus had recognized—what indeed is apparent—that the chronic poverty which, side by side with a surfeit of wealth, is so characteristic an accompaniment of organized society could not be due to natural conditions, and that the cause thereof must be looked for in some defect of the social system. For one thing, it is to be found in organized society only. It is never to be met with among animals, nor among primitive people living in a state of nature. "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; it is man only who does not know where to lay his head." <sup>1</sup>

Nobody to-day would advance the theory that the earth cannot supply, or could not be made to supply, sufficient sustenance for all. For, if that were the case, then all would suffer alike, as is the case with a herd of animals on a poor pasture. Yet there are some . . .

But why repeat once more these commonplace reflections? The facts are obvious enough, and have been discussed from time immemorial and times out of number. We know it is so. But *why* is it so? *Why* this dire poverty in the midst of plenty? *Why* this lust for wealth and this feverish race for riches, when nature—or "the Father which is in heaven"—is ever ready to respond to man's demands; when "everyone that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh, it is opened"? Then why all this anxiety—not of *Gentiles* only, but of *all people*—"What shall we

\* What different meanings the words of the Sage acquire once they are freed of their theological cerements!

eat? " "What shall we drink?" "Wherewithal shall we be clothed?"

Such an analysis can lead to one result only. The want of faith in the powers of nature (or "the bounties of the Father") is unjustified, and the true cause of this uncertainty must be sought in unjust human laws and customs.

Thus viewed, and from such a view-point only, this discourse on riches becomes intelligible, and well worth the most careful study; for its few trenchant sentences contain more truly practical and relevant wisdom concerning this most important problem than is to be found in many a stout volume of what has become known as "the dismal science." It is the mocking irony of fate only which has characterized the teachings of the greatest and wisest of thinkers as "impracticable" and "foolish," and designated the artificial systems which have so signally failed in their diagnoses as well as in their prescriptions as "science" or "philosophy."

Far from being impracticable or foolish, the counsels and precepts of Jesus offer *the only possible solution* of the vexed social problems which so far mankind have striven in vain to solve. His precepts are all in direct line of historical development, and—as previously pointed out—do what we will, we can no more evade these despised "sayings" than we can free ourselves from the law of gravitation. We may ignore them; but we cannot escape the punishment. To see this we need only study the history of social evolution at any period, past or present.

Jesus was not by any means the first reformer—as he certainly was not the last—who deprecated the pursuit of wealth for its own sake. The menace of wealth and the accumulation of riches have at all times been, as they are to-day, matters of grave concern, not to irresponsible idealists only, but to legislators and statesmen of most conservative leanings. For what else is the meaning of the world-wide agitation against "capital"—as this power of the rich over the poor is now designated—than a recognition of the evil which agitated the prophets

of old, and which Jesus discoursed upon in his dissertation on riches? And what else are the many legislative attempts of our own times dealing with "capital" and "labour" than attempts to grapple with the evils which spring from this insensate lust for riches?

For all so-called labour legislation is but so many attempts to check, or to control, the undue accumulation of wealth, and to limit the powers which it gives to the rich over the poor. As such attempts must be regarded the laws against unfair competition; the fixation of the age-limit, of hours of labour and rate of wages, all trade-union regulations; graduated taxation and "super taxes", death duties; the limitation of profits which are divisible by public companies among their shareholders (*vide* law to this effect in the United States of America), etc.

What else, I ask, can be the meaning of such legislative efforts than attempts to grapple with this most ancient and at the same time most burning problem of to-day? For, notwithstanding what contemporary writers have said, this problem is not of recent origin. Modern industrial methods may have aggravated the evil, or, what seems more probable, may have made the exploitation of the many by the few more apparent; the dependence of the former on the latter more obvious; and the sufferings in the worst cases more acute. But the problem itself, and the evils which constitute it a problem, are probably as old as is organized society. *It originated when for the first time man gained mastery over man; when for the first time man departed from the RULE OF GOD—or "kingdom of God"—and submitted to the authority of a fellow-being.*

And the only possible way out of this impasse is, according to the Sage of Galilee, a return to the RULE or REIGN OF GOD.

Who dare question his contention? Who could maintain that he was wrong in his conclusion? Who contend that peace is possible where injustice reigns? Or that justice is possible in a community where one man has *power* over another man, and can levy on him tribute

without, or even against, his consent—no matter by what refined process or machinery such tribute is exacted? Who can say that Jesus was wrong when he said that there was no other way out of this labyrinth than by establishing “the reign of justice”?

The echo of nineteen centuries of experimenting and tinkering calls back challengingly, *Who can?*

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### THE UPAS-TREE

Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire—MATT. vii 19

Woe unto the world because of abuses; for from abuses come afflictions. But yet greater woe to that man through whom the abuses come.—MATT xviii 7 (Author's translation)

You know how the rulers of the nations lord it over them heavily, and how the magnates oppress them. Let it not be so among you. On the contrary, whosoever would be great among you, let him be your servant, and he that would be first among you, let him be your slave—MATT xx 25-7 (Author's translation)

THE main contentions of Jesus were directed against two evils, from which sprang all the preventable afflictions which beset mankind. These are the lust for *material wealth* and the lust for *power*. Of these two root-evils the former is probably the more potent one, as it certainly is the primary or tap-root of the great upas-tree.

Power, after all, can only be used as a means towards an end; and the only use (in a sordid sense) which one man can make of another is to be able to command his services: either in kind, or—indirectly—by levying tribute on him.

But for *this* nobody would seek mastery over his fellows. But for this *power of exploitation* "mastery" would have no meaning at all; would, in fact, be impossible. "Greatness" without such *power to exact* service or tribute would be an empty shell, unless it rested on the spontaneous homage, reverence, or gratitude of the people in acknowledgment of some *service rendered*. Such greatness, however, could be achieved by those only who *served* their fellow-men in some conspicuous and unselfish way. It would be a *homage given*, and not a *tribute*

*exacted*. "Wherefore, whosoever would be great among you, let him be your servant; and he that would be first among you, let him be your slave." That is, if anyone thinks he can be of some service to you, let him show it by *serving you*; but on no account shall you call anyone master upon earth.

From these two root-evils has sprung the upas-tree which by its evil fruits has poisoned, and is poisoning, the source of our social life. And what is the *remedy* for the evils thus engendered?

If by remedy is meant an antidote, a corrective, or a palliative, then—according to Jesus—there is none. The tree is known by its fruit; and if the fruit is evil, this shows that the tree which brought it forth is evil, and therefore *cannot bring forth good fruit*. Nor is it in the power of man to change the character of the fruit unless—as a first condition—he changes the tree also.

Which means that, although we may determine the kind of tree which shall be planted, we cannot say what kind of fruit it shall bring forth, nor change the character of that fruit. Or, in general terms, we may vary the *conditions*, but not the results which shall follow from any set of conditions. That has been settled for us from eternity—each act is followed by its own *definite* and *predetermined* consequences. It is a truism which has found expression in the commonplace saying, "As ye sow, so ye shall reap," and which science has formulated into its basic "law of causation." But its significance—at least as far as social phenomena are concerned—has never been appreciated as fully and as thoroughly as by the Sage of Galilee. It cannot be too often insisted upon that social evolution does not depend on the wishes or arbitrary ordinances of men, any more than does the evolution of our bodies, but is the result of unseen agencies or forces which are as eternal and as immutable as are the principles or "laws" which govern so-called physical phenomena. And he who hopes to be able by some sort of wizardry or necromancy "to gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles" has yet to learn the most elementary truths of his existence.

Jesus did not try to palliate *symptoms*, but penetrated to *causes*; for he recognized that only by changing conditions could effects be modified

We have seen in the preceding chapter how he proposed to arrest the lust for treasure-hunting; that is, by doing away with the *causes* which led to it. Ye are worried about the future—he said in effect—about the means of life. Do ye not see that the response of your Father is always adequate and liberal—or, in the words of the proverb, God never sends a mouth, but sends a loaf also—and that it is your own greed and mutual jealousies which are the cause of the uncertainty that causes you so much worry and anxiety? *Seek ye, therefore, first to establish the reign of justice, and all else will follow as matter of course.*

What Jesus aimed at was to establish the *reign* (or “kingdom”) of God in place of *the anarchy of man*: a *Theocracy* which must not be confounded with a *Hierarchy* or an *Oligarchy*, of whatever composition. His “kingdom” was not of this world at all, and could be neither superimposed on, nor co-ordinated with, the existing *rule of man*. The two systems were not only irreconcilable, but destructive of each other.

Lust for *wealth* and lust for *power* were the twin roots of the upas-tree from which emanated the exhalations which poisoned the social atmosphere; and hence the only possible hope of redemption lay in the utter destruction of the tree itself. The reign of justice (rendered in the English translation as “the kingdom of righteousness”) would make it impossible for any man to reap where he had not sown; but neither would he any longer be menaced by thieves. “Wherefore, in all things whatsoever that ye would that man should do unto you, do you likewise unto them; *for on this hang all the law and the prophets.*”

But there were obstacles, or “stumbling-blocks” (“*skandala*”), which made the adoption of this *natural course* (or “kingdom of heaven”) impossible. His remedy was no less radical. But, as in the former case, which dealt with *the lust for wealth*, so his utterances



regarding *the lust for power* have been—*under the influence of that very power which he proscribed*—deliberately mis-translated and misinterpreted.

There are two passages in particular which are explicit as far as the Greek texts are concerned, but which have been cunningly translated so as to twist their original meaning into the very opposite of what Jesus so emphatically enjoined. The inaccuracy of the translation may be seen by merely comparing the rendering of the A.V. with that of the R.V. But when either rendering is compared with the original Greek, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the “errors” must have been the result of deliberation.

I will print here both versions side by side, with as near a literal translation as the peculiarities of the two languages will admit, so that the reader may judge for himself how the alleged “inspired word of God” has been manipulated to serve most sordidly “secular” purposes. I will take the passage in Matt. xx. 25-7 first.

A V.	R.V.	Author's Version.
Ye know that the <i>princes</i> of the <i>Gentiles</i> (sic!) <i>exercise dominion</i> over them, and <i>they that are great exercise authority</i> over them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your <i>minister</i> (sic!); and whosoever will be <i>chief</i> among you, let him be your <i>servant</i> .	Ye know that the <i>rulers</i> of the <i>Gentiles</i> (sic!) <i>lord it over them</i> , and their <i>great ones exercise authority</i> . Not so shall it be among you: but whosoever would become great among you shall be your <i>minister</i> (sic!); and whosoever would be <i>first</i> among you, shall be your <i>servant</i> .	Ye know how the <i>rulers</i> of the <i>nations</i> <i>lord it over them heavily</i> <sup>1</sup> and how their <i>magnates oppress</i> them. <sup>2</sup> Let it not be so among you. On the contrary, whosoever would be great among you, let him be your servant; <sup>3</sup> and he that would be <i>first</i> among you, let him be your <i>slave</i> <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> κατακυριεύουσιν.

<sup>2</sup> κατεξουσιάζουσιν.

<sup>3</sup> διάκονος.

<sup>4</sup> δοῦλος.

I have underlined certain parts where the deviations are most marked. It will be seen that the wording in the third column is plain, unequivocal, and emphatic; in striking contrast with that in the first column. Special attention must again be given to the substitution of “Gentiles” for “nations” in the rendering of “ethnē”;

by which ruse the passage has been deprived of its force and meaning. For whereas "ethnē" includes *all nations*, the word "Gentiles" applies to non-Jews only; that is, "nations that have not received the faith, or law of God,"—or, briefly, *heathens*. This makes it easy for a preacher to prove that the strictures of Jesus did not apply to "the most Christian sovereign" in whose service he may happen to be, but to those only with whom he happened to be at enmity, and who therefore are as bad as heathens.

That, however, was not what Jesus meant. He roundly condemned *all rulers*, and acknowledged only "the Father which is in heaven."

Perhaps still more striking is the departure from the original sense in the passage of Matt. xviii. 7:—

A V.	R V	Author's Version
Woe unto the world because of offences: for it must needs be that offences come but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh.	Woe unto the world because of occasions of stumbling! for it must needs be that occasions come; but woe to the man through whom the occasion cometh.	Woe is in the world because of abuses; for from abuses come afflictions (anagkē) But yet greater woe to that man through whom the abuses come.

"Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee it is better for thee to enter life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, and be cast into everlasting fire."<sup>1</sup>

It is obvious that Jesus spoke in parable, as was his wont, and that the offending hands and feet were meant to typify cherished but harmful institutions.

Jesus preached "the kingdom of God"; but by it he did not mean a realm in the clouds, which could be reached through the gates of death only; but *a reign of justice upon earth*, where the only ruler is to be "the Father which is in heaven," and where "all ye are brethren."

It was a Theocracy—the *rule of God*—in the strictest

<sup>1</sup> Near Jerusalem there is a valley which was called Gehennah, or "Valley of Hinnom." In it stood at one time the temple of Moloch, where human sacrifices were offered. In the time of Jesus the valley was used as a destructor to burn offal. Hence "the ever burning fires of Gehenna," which was later identified with the "Hell" of the Greeks.

sense of the word which Jesus tried to establish. But that was a menace to the then existing Hierarchy and Oligarchy ; just as it would be a menace to what in our own days are known as " Church " and " State." *And this was the real issue between Jesus and the powers which were opposed to him.*

It is necessary to bear this issue clearly in mind, and more particularly the distinction drawn by Jesus between the favour which a grateful nation might bestow on someone for *services rendered* and the " greatness " of despots who *exact services*. For then only is it possible to understand the true nature of the problem which mankind has to solve, and why to this day it has remained unsolved, notwithstanding the great mental efforts and the rivers of blood which have been spent in so many fruitless attempts. Then—and then only—will the reader be able to understand the purport and meaning of the counsels, precepts, and injunctions of Jesus, and why the teacher of such pure and lofty sentiments was nailed to the cross. *For that tale has yet to be told.*

He certainly was not put to death because of his " ethics," as these are represented and interpreted by Christian " divines "; nor because of any claims to divinity or Messiahship with which posterity has so unjustly and unjustifiably charged him. For, in the first place, he never put forth any such claim ; and, secondly, had he done so, it would scarcely have provoked the priesthood to such implacable hatred. There is ample evidence in support of both these contentions.

That Jesus himself never claimed to be " Christ " is sufficiently clear from Paul's explicit statement that *not until after his death was he " declared " to be Christ*. For Paul says most plainly that " Jesus Christ our Lord . . . was declared to be Son of God . . . BY THE RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD." <sup>1</sup> Paul is also a good witness for the contention that, even had Jesus claimed Messiahship, or sonship of God, this in itself would not have been regarded by the ruling powers as a grave offence, since Paul himself was allowed to do so for him in the syna-

<sup>1</sup> Rom. 1. 4.

gogues of the Jews; and though the claim was hotly contested on scriptural and historical grounds (*vide* the contention about the descent from David), Paul was not molested until he abrogated the Mosaic law.

Nor did the sentiments of love, kindness, and forbearance preached by Jesus provoke resentment among his compatriots, since such teachings were neither alien nor new among the Jews. Jewish commentators are unquestionably right when they insist that there was nothing original in the Sermon on the Mount, or offensive to Jewish sentiment, which could have served as a basis for an accusation against its author, much less resulted in his being sentenced to death for it.

Nominally Jesus was accused of blasphemy; but that charge is absurd on the face of it. Blasphemy means reviling the Deity; an offence which is simply unthinkable in connection with Jesus, who placed God before and above all else.

No; the crime of Jesus was not that he did not reverence God, *but that he revered nothing and nobody else*. To him "the Father which was in heaven" was the only *guide*; <sup>1</sup> his "will" the only law; and the people "*were all brethren*."

And that was the heinous crime which Jesus had committed and which he had to expiate on the cross. Let me repeat it: his crime was—and in the eyes of the Churches still is—that he preached the *reign of God*, which has fraudulently been rendered the *kingdom* of God, and has been interpreted to mean a *realm* in the clouds to be reached *after death*, and by those only who support and obey a system which Jesus denounced as an unmitigated evil.

The truth is that Jesus was guilty of two ugly—though entirely artificial—crimes: crimes which in a society such as he tried to establish would be impossible and unthinkable, but which to this day are looked upon in every

<sup>1</sup> Not "master," as in the English version, but "guide." The Greek word is "*kathēgetēs*," which is derived from *kathēgōmai*, which means "to lead the way" or "to guide." Jesus spoke of God as "Father," "Teacher," or "Guide," but never as "master" or by any appellation which suggests the despot, potentate, or tyrant.

Christian land as the blackest crimes which it is possible for man to commit. They are *heresy* and *sedition*. the one meaning a disregard of the rulings of the priesthood, and the other disobedience to the rulings of a prince; neither of which was to have either place or authority in the Theocracy of Jesus.

Jesus fell a victim to the poison of that very tree which he tried to uproot and to destroy, but which has blossomed into the twin-powers of *Church* and *State*.

And here I would once more remind the reader that the matter for consideration in the first place is not whether the ideals of Jesus were right or wrong, practicable or impracticable, but *what* they were, be they right or wrong. We may accept or reject his counsels; but we have no right to falsify his words so as to make them coincide with our own views—or the views which people may be compelled to defend, whether they were their own or not. Still less can there be a moral justification for attributing divinity to Jesus, and then under that weighty authority promulgate doctrines to which he was opposed, and for denouncing which he had to die a cruel death. Rather let us face the facts as they are, even if in doing so we may have to disturb some cobwebs which are endeared to us by tender memories. Let us remember the words of the Teacher, “Affliction cometh from abuses, wherefore if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee.” And surely there can be no greater offence than a falsehood; no more serious abuse than the perversion of truth.

called—would not be a *Commonwealth*. Nor could the ideal of universal peace and goodwill be ensured in a society where either individuals or classes enjoy *privileges* to the exclusion, or at the expense, of the rest of the community.

And so we find once more that the counsels of Jesus were not the illusory ideals of a dreamer, but *inevitable deductions from the logic of facts*. They are all in direct line of social evolution, and to oppose their tendencies means fighting against destiny.

The second question, "Is such a state of society desirable, even if possible?" we need not discuss at all, for it is *the heaven* for which mankind has ever been yearning. It is only because they failed to see how it could be established on earth that people looked for it in the clouds of their imagination. Yet nothing is more within such easy reach of man, if only he could be made to see and to understand the meaning of these words: "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation, for, behold, *the kingdom of God is within you*."

Not the seer who has perceived this; who has contemplated Nature and grasped the meaning of her mysteries; who has recognized that the world is governed by eternal, immutable laws; who is the visionary dreamer: but he who would conquer nature by force, or fancies that by threats or incantations he can command the tides.

Surely nothing could be plainer or more conclusive. Even the subtle ruse that the remarks refer to "Gentiles" only is here inapplicable, since the above denunciation was explicitly directed against those who "sat in Moses' seat." His dictum, "Call no man master upon earth," was absolute. From that conclusion there is no escape, and the only question which remains is whether the counsel is acceptable.

In this connection two questions press for answer. Firstly, is such a system at all practicable, even if desirable? Secondly, would such a system be desirable even if practicable?

Answers to these questions are not to be sought in the vague field of opinion, but must be deduced from the logic of facts. We must follow the method indicated by Jesus in the passage quoted at the head of this chapter, which is also the method of science: that is, we must observe the trend of events, and interpret tendencies as we have learnt to interpret the face of the earth and the heaven.

For—let it be stated once more—it is not man's will or intentions which govern the ultimate course of events—if I may so express myself—but an inevitable destiny which we may hasten or retard, but can no more evade than we can prevent the stream from reaching the ocean by throwing a dam across its path.

"Man proposes, but God disposes" is a perfectly correct generalization, expressing the common experience of mankind in a homely way, the real meaning of which has not been appreciated by philosophers and statesmen as it deserves to be. Had they done so, they would have placed less reliance on their arbitrary systems.

It is not the counsels and deeds of these blind leaders of the blind whence we may hope to obtain the needed guidance. Let us consult *history*, by all means; not, however, the opinions of this or that writer, but the records of actual facts.

What are they? What is the natural trend of events? In which direction are we being carried by the stream of time? In short, What is the *destiny* toward which we are drifting in spite of ourselves. and without being able

to prevent it? For then only, when we understand the direction of the current by which we are carried along, shall we know how to steer our craft rationally.

By help of Gamaliel's test it should not be difficult to deduce from the trend of events correct answers to these questions—for *God* [or *nature*] never errs. What, then, are the outstanding facts of history?

These, that for untold generations man has fought man for supremacy and for the control of the means of life. For thousands and thousands of years the strong or the cunning who succeeded in gaining mastery over their fellow-men were feared, flattered, and adored. Nations were subjugated and drilled into submission. Every effort had been made by rulers to ensure their dominance and that of their descendants. People were taught that kingship was a divine institution; that the person of the king was sacred; and homage was paid to such despots which was greater than that paid to the Deity. The king was—and is—"the all-highest," the "most gracious," the "most high and mighty" sovereign, whose person was sacrosanct, whose will was *law*, and who—*though he could not add an inch to his stature, nor make a hair black or white*—had command of life and death over millions of *his subjects*.

In this state of things mankind acquiesced, until it has become a conviction that without such a *supreme head* society could not exist—so much so that when a people finds itself without a king—maybe because they have just succeeded in freeing themselves from the death-grip of a former tyrant—they actually scour the world in search of some princeling who is to *rule* over them.

These are the facts of history.

Now, if it were natural for some people to rule and for others to be ruled over, this tendency should have become more firmly established the longer it endured, and its *inevitableness* should by now be as much beyond doubt or question as is the distinction of race or sex.

But what are the actual results? Everywhere the tendency is towards a democracy, where the power is to emanate *from* the people, to remain *with* the people.



and where the *rulers* are to be the servants of the people instead of being their masters. Everywhere despotism is slowly yielding to democratic institutions. Everywhere the impression is deepening that "the people are the salt of the earth" and that all men are—or should be—brethren; and that it is a violation of "the natural rights of man" that anyone should have pre-eminence over his fellows.

In short, the tendency is towards Democracy; and the Theocracy of Jesus is the highest and purest form of a true Democracy.

In this country at least—admittedly one of the freest and best governed—it is no longer a crime to speak of "the *sovereign* people" or "the *sovereign will* of the people"; and it is considered real praise when the nominal sovereign is referred to as a *constitutional* king; that is, as one who is doing his best to *serve* the people by carrying out their constitutionally expressed wishes.

True, we are as yet far from the ideal Commonwealth as conceived by Jesus, even in the most democratically governed countries. But what I wish to point out is that we are tending in that direction; that the conditions laid down by Jesus *are all in the direct line of social evolution*. Indeed, it could be shown that the merits of any existing form of government are those features of it which comply—and insofar only as they comply—with the conditions laid down by Jesus; and that any shortcomings from that ideal are so many defects.

But what is of even greater significance is that all countries and all nations, without exception, are *tending* in that direction, even though the ruling powers are doing their utmost to suppress such tendencies.

Thus ancient Persia, autocratic Russia,<sup>1</sup> tyrannical Turkey, despotic China, priest-ridden Spain—to mention only some of the countries most removed from democratic rule—are all *tending* in one and the same direction, whilst the respective rulers are striving in the opposite direction. They foolishly think this democratic spirit to be a human invention, engineered by this or that political "agitator."

and that by killing such they can stamp out the *spirit* which has called them into being "Thus far and no farther!" roars the arrogant despot; but heedless of such silly outbursts the tide rolls on, slowly but surely and the ultimate issue is no more doubtful than is the destination of the river or of the streamlets which feed it. For, as Jesus so truly said, "*Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law till all be fulfilled.*"

Verily the wise Gamaliel was right when he said that whatever is of man will come to nought; and that which is of God cannot be overthrown.

Strange conclusions these; so utterly at variance with all accepted notions. Yet, what does it all amount to? This, that it is not human wisdom nor man's will which rules the moral world, any more than it rules the physical world. That—whether we know it or not; whether we approve of it or not—there is a destiny which we have to fulfil—or perish. That in the moral as in the physical world, *effects are the result of conditions*; and if we would reap a particular crop, we must sow the *right seed* and in the *right way*. That is, that whilst we are free to choose the seed which shall be sown, or the tree which shall be planted, we cannot say what fruits the tree shall bear, once it is planted.

Let those who marvel at "the failure of Christianity" and the inconsistencies of our civilization, or who despair of ever finding a way out of this man-created misery, ponder well over this generalization; for it contains the answer to the riddle of the Sphinx. It is a mere commonplace, certainly, but it is for the lack of common sense that human wisdom has failed.

And now let us return to the two questions which, in the beginning of this chapter, we proposed to find answers to. The answer to the first question, "*Is a Commonwealth such as conceived by Jesus practicable?*" is that not only is it practicable, but, in the end, it is *inevitable*. Nay, we can say more than this: *No other is possible*; for any social system which falls short of the conditions laid down by Jesus—whatever else it might be

called—would not be a *Commonwealth*. Nor could the ideal of universal peace and goodwill be ensured in a society where either individuals or classes enjoy *privileges* to the exclusion, or at the expense, of the rest of the community.

And so we find once more that the counsels of Jesus were not the illusory ideals of a dreamer, but *inevitable deductions from the logic of facts*. They are all in direct line of social evolution, and to oppose their tendencies means fighting against destiny.

The second question, "Is such a state of society desirable, even if possible?" we need not discuss at all, for it is *the heaven* for which mankind has ever been yearning. It is only because they failed to see how it could be established on earth that people looked for it in the clouds of their imagination. Yet nothing is more within such easy reach of man, if only he could be made to see and to understand the meaning of these words "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation, for, behold, *the kingdom of God is within you*."

Not the seer who has perceived this; who has contemplated Nature and grasped the meaning of her mysteries; who has recognized that the world is governed by eternal, immutable laws; who is the visionary dreamer: but he who would conquer nature by force, or fancies that by threats or incantations he can command the tides.

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### FALSE PROPHETS

By their fruits ye shall know them.—JESUS.

As has more than once been pointed out in these pages, the precepts of Jesus have never yet been considered by either philosopher or statesman as deserving serious consideration in connection with the practical affairs of life.

They were never regarded even by the Churches as being more than a collection of moral maxims which were useful in the training of children, but which were irrelevant and inapplicable beyond the nursery or the Sunday school. And it must be admitted that, in the form in which they have been presented as an incoherent collection of maxims or precepts, there seems to be little in them deserving the attention of those charged with the responsibilities of the family or the State.

It is quite different, however, when we contemplate them as parts of a cogent, coherent, and consistent system of philosophy which is based on the actualities of life. Then each acquires a new meaning and an importance never suspected by those who arrogated to themselves the sole right of interpreting—and of *disregarding*—these teachings.

Indeed, those false prophets—*false* in more than one sense—not only have failed to interpret correctly the Great Teacher, but, by corrupting the text and burying the truth beneath a gigantic mass of dogmatic rubbish and dialectical nonsense, have made his teachings inaccessible to the general public, and even beyond the reach of the average student.

In support of this statement I would point out that no less than two closely reasoned chapters had to be

devoted to explain just the one sentence "Take no thought for the morrow," and to turn the nonsense which learning and piety have succeeded in imparting to it into its original common sense. Similarly, the injunction "Be ye not called Rabbi" seems trite until we learn that the objection to a seemingly harmless title only emphasized the warning not to submit to any human dominance whatsoever, or under whatsoever pretence. Then only do we comprehend the far-reaching importance of a seemingly trite injunction.<sup>1</sup>

It is beyond the scope of this work—even if the writer did not feel so acutely his lack of qualification and want of opportunity for such a task—to revise the translation of all the utterances of Jesus recorded in the Gospels, so as to restore to them their original meaning. That task must be left to more competent hands. All the present writer hopes to do is to remove sufficient of the theological rubbish to show that beneath it there are treasures well worth the attention of experts in these matters.

But we have learnt enough of the philosophy of Jesus to understand such of his precepts, counsels, or injunctions which hitherto have been beyond rational comprehension. Above all, we know now what he meant when he prayed "*Thy kingdom come*," "*thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*." We know now that "*the kingdom of God*" meant the *reign of equity*, of impartial justice, of the equality or brotherhood of man, and *the absence of dominance of man over man*. We understand now also what was in the Seer's mind when he said that the second law—"Love thy neighbour as thyself"—was like unto the first, and that "on these two commandments hung all the law and the prophets." For when the meaning of this basic principle is fully grasped, all the precepts and injunctions of Jesus follow as mere matter of course. Then indeed the whole law might be taught—as did Hillel—to any inquirer whilst he could stand on one leg.

<sup>1</sup> How well justified the warning was has been proved by the fact that the plain "Rabbi" has since then blossomed into "His Holiness," with princely powers, and all the mischief which follows in the wake of power.

Whether the deductions from this basic principle are feasible or practicable is another matter, which shall presently receive our attention.

But let it be remembered that this doubt applies even more strongly to the system in vogue than to the proposals of Jesus, inasmuch as these have yet to be tried, whereas the prevalent systems have been tried most extensively for centuries, in an endless variety of ways, and have been found wanting.

I said *systems* ; for we shall have to consider at least two—that of the religious and that of the secular powers. I propose to contrast each in turn with the counsels of Jesus, commencing with the former.

Dating Christianity from the time of the conversion of Paul, it has had more than eighteen hundred years in which to justify itself ; with the result that at the present time the chief topic concerning it is an animated discussion as to *the causes* of its utter failure. The failure itself is, of course, admitted, as of necessity it must be in view of the fact that Christian nations are engaged in the most sanguinary and most atrociously waged war known to history. And they are doing so with the approval of the teachers and defenders of the Christian cult—the ministers of each country blessing the instruments of war wherewith “ the children of the Father which is in heaven ” are to be killed or maimed, and praying for the victory of their respective armies.<sup>1</sup>

This is not meant in any way as a reproach to the clergy, but as an indictment against the faith which they promulgate. It is natural that the pastors should be in sympathy with the people to whom they belong by ties of blood. I merely want to point out how that which is natural cannot be co-ordinated with the doctrines which they are teaching ; how they themselves fail to comply—when it is most urgently necessary that they should do so—with their own teachings. I merely desire

<sup>1</sup> In my allusions to the war, which is here referred to for the object-lessons only which it supplies, I purposely refrain from showing bias, as these chapters are intended to appeal to all reasonable men, of what-

to point out that Christianity—no less than the wisdom of the secular authorities—has failed, so as to be able to trace the cause of that failure.

It is my intention to show that religion and statecraft, or Church and State, have both failed *because they have rejected the only sound philosophy which has ever been presented to mankind*; that whatever partial successes either can show have been achieved only by compliance with the rules of that philosophy, *and in so far only as these rules have been complied with*. And this shall be the answer to the objection that the precepts of Jesus are beyond the range of what is practicable.

To guard against possible misunderstandings, I would again remind the reader that he must not confuse the teachings of Jesus with the doctrines of Christianity. In these pages at least the two are not the same, but *the antithesis of each other*. By Christianity is here meant the system of faith and worship based on the Christology of Paul, which enjoins the very opposite of what Jesus taught.

If against this it should be urged that the precepts of Jesus are part of Christianity, this would only aggravate the charge of falseness; for there is not a single one of his precepts or injunctions which has not been systematically violated by official Christianity, or which is not at the present moment outrageously set at naught by Christian nations.

It cannot be pleaded that Christianity has failed for want of opportunity or lack of support from the secular powers; for practically it made the opportunities itself in every Christian State, and to a considerable extent it constituted the State. Where the Church could not actually dictate to the State in secular as well as in religious matters, it nevertheless had the full support of the latter in spiritual affairs. State and Church, or Church and State, have ever been faithful allies when either of them was menaced by the rising spirit of the times, notwithstanding mutual rivalries and occasional quarrels with each other.

If, therefore, we now judge Christianity by its fruits, it cannot be pleaded on its behalf that it has not had a fair

chance to unfold its powers for good. That plea might be made—and *is herewith made*—for the precepts of Jesus. But that, instead of being a defence of, is an indictment against, Christianity. For the philosophy of Jesus has never yet been properly examined even, let alone tried, by either Church or State; whereas Christianity has had for more than a thousand years the almost exclusive control of the education and the training of the people of Christian Europe. And in her capacity as teacher, no less than as guardian, the Church knew how to use the “birch,” nor did she shrink from applying it, when some of her wards were mutinous or refractory.

She was sole mistress of the world, and therefore is responsible for our morals, our culture, our sentiments, our institutions, our religion—aye, *even for the spirit of revolt which now threatens her downfall*. “By their fruits ye shall know them.” It is a most terrible harvest which mankind is reaping just now as a result of the sowing by Christianity. It is a calamity such as has never before been known among people called “savages” or “heathens”—a veritable inferno, compared with which the threatened terrors of the theological hell pale into insignificance.

These are the fruits of eighteen centuries of sowing.

If, in the face of these results, it be still contended that Christianity is blameless, then Jesus must have been wrong when he said that a tree may be known by its fruit. Then it should be possible to gather figs of thorns, or grapes of thistles.

Or shall we say that the Churches *have* taught what Jesus has enjoined, and that the evils are all consequent on, or the result of, *his* teachings?

It is a dread alternative, but we must face it: either Jesus was utterly wrong, or the Churches have failed to interpret him correctly.

Which was the false prophet?

Let us see.

After more than a thousand years of teaching and preaching, what is the ruling idea which Christianity has instilled into the mind of the children over whose intellectual and moral training she had practically sole control?



Let us take four main currents of thought and action which go to make up the intellectual and moral life of a nation. Religion, Statecraft, Philosophy, and Commercialism.

What disparate subjects these are! There does not seem to be a point of contact between any of them. In both aims and method each differs so essentially from the others that a comparison from any point of view seems impossible. And yet the leading motive of each could be stated in identical terms. Indeed, the *vox populi* has done so in its own expressive vernacular, by the aphorism "Each for himself, and the devil take the hindmost"

In business and in statecraft this maxim is frankly acknowledged to be the guiding principle. Though not admitted, it is nevertheless also the keynote of contemporary philosophy; for such catch-phrases as "Utilitarianism," "Superman," "Struggle for existence," "Survival of the fittest," "The weakest must go to the wall," etc., are but thin disguises of what is expressed more bluntly, if less learnedly, in such popular saws as "Self first and last," "Charity begins at home," "Take care of Number One," "Have an eye to the main chance," and so on.

And how about religion, which is supposed to check and correct such selfish tendencies? Alas! it is the arch-sinner—conventional religion, that is—for it enjoins as a first duty on the people to make sure of the salvation of their own soul, at whatever cost to themselves or to others. It is self, and always self. And for this vicious outlook on life, its purpose and its duties, Christianity must be held responsible; not merely because it has failed to expose the underlying fallacy, but because *it upheld it by precept and fostered it by example.*

Christianity is based on deliberate untruths and false premises: well meant, may be; but false in every essential, none the less.

To begin with, it despised this life; taught that man was born in sin and corruption; that happiness is to be found on the other side of the grave only; and

that the chief concern of each should be to secure this happiness for himself, at all hazards.

Christianity taught—what is manifestly untrue—that a person could be happy though the rest of mankind was not; and that the bliss in that far-off cloudland was of such sublimity that one could enjoy the delights of paradise though parent, child, friend, or neighbour were suffering unspeakable torments; that the “elect” could witness the anguish and hear the groans of the “lost,” and still call such a place “heaven” and such a life “blessed.”

It is needless to point out how contrary all this is to the teachings of Jesus, as well as to the common experience of mankind.

Far from being a religion of love, Pauline Christianity is selfishness in the extreme.

Do not, I pray, misunderstand me. I say all this of *Christianity*, but not of *Christians*; of “*Christ*”—alias Paul—but not of Jesus; of the impostor who with the alluring false promises has hypnotized mankind, but not of the victims of that deception.

Of the people themselves, all I have to say is that they have been deluded and misled by false prophets; of the ministers who teach these doctrines, that they are deceived deceivers. But of either as “the children of the Father which is in heaven” I have to say nothing but good; since even the corrupt and corrupting doctrines of Paul and his followers have failed to suppress their immanent goodness of heart and soul.

It is this innate kindness and mutual love which has got us so far on the road of civilization, and not the jarring, contentious doctrines which fostered the love of self and the hatred of others, which came between the self and the objects of its desire

It is a false and mischievous doctrine that man is born in sin; that he is incapable of righteousness; that he is unworthy of salvation; or that he can be saved vicariously only by the grace of a demon such as Paul conceived God to be. The contrary of all this is true.

Man is born in *love* and not in sin. There is no love

greater or holier than that of mother and child. There is nothing more sinless—baptized or not—than the child in the mother's arms. Woe unto him who dare offend one of these little ones, *for of such is the kingdom of heaven.*

What there is good and true and noble in the Gospels—the “ethics” of Jesus—has been deliberately rejected by the Churches as impracticable, and in doing so the only thread which connected Christianity with its supposed founder has been severed. And that is the reason why Christianity has failed.

Christ, *alias* Saul of Tarsus, *alias* Paul, the self-appointed “apostle,” stands convicted as a false prophet by every test which can be applied. His premises are untrue; his deductions are wrong; his pretence of being ambassador of God or the interpreter of Jesus is false. And most conclusive of all, the tree which he has planted has brought forth none but evil fruit.

## CHAPTER XL

### FALSE PROPHETS (*continued*)

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that would enter to go in —MATT XXIII. 13.

LET us raise the question once more, but in a different form.

It has been said that it is not the Church but civilization that is a failure. By civilization, I presume, are meant all the activities which do not come within the scope of the Church; in short, all the mundane affairs of life.

I shall not stop to inquire what there is left as the province of the Church, after these are eliminated. I shall not even contend if the plea be made that secular matters are no concern of the Churches, that this is more than an admission of failure as affecting matters pertaining to this life: it is a blank repudiation of responsibility.

I will waive these and similar objections that could legitimately be raised to such a plea, and accept the implied accusation against the civil authorities. Let us assume that this calamity has been brought on the world by errors of statesmanship; that, had the Churches been consulted, it could not have happened; that, were the Churches consulted now, the evil could speedily be banished, and that peace and goodwill would reign at last.

I am speaking of Churches—in the plural—because there are many; which in itself is a proof that they are the blind leaders of the blind. For when there is neither peace nor goodwill as between one and another of these

sectarians, how can they hope to give to the world that which they do not possess themselves? How can they hope to remove the mote from the eye of the secular power whilst they themselves are afflicted with a beam?

But even this objection we may waive for the moment, and instead of "Churches" speak of "Christianity." Let us limit the meaning of this term to what is essential and is common to all, and then ask, What counsels has Christianity, thus relieved of the reproach of sectarianism, to offer to the responsible rulers of the State, after having eliminated the precepts and counsels of Jesus? For these not only are not part of Christianity, but have been rejected by the Churches themselves as impracticable and inapplicable to the mundane affairs of man.

In the present devastating war, what could be more ridiculous than the conception of bishops and archbishops waiting on the responsible authorities of the State, Bible and Prayer-book in hand, for the purpose of advising them what to do to end this calamity, and how to make a recurrence of it impossible? Is there a man living within or without the pale of the Churches who would not shrink from the very idea of their interference as too frivolous in such serious circumstances?

Could any ruler or statesman be expected to consider for a single moment the suggestion that he should consult the spiritual leaders what to do in exigencies which threaten the existence of the nation? Or, if he made a reply at all to such a suggestion, could we expect him to say more than, "Let the Churches first establish peace among themselves," or "Let Christianity set us an example how its doctrines are to be applied"?

Christianity—apart from the discarded "ethics" of Jesus—has nothing to offer. It is a philosophy of despair, and has been conceived in despair by a pessimist who saw no possible salvation for mankind. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," he said,<sup>1</sup> and therefore he consigned this world to perdition and built his hopes on another world—a kind of happy hunting-ground—

<sup>1</sup> Cor. xv. 50.

to be established in the clouds after this has been annihilated.<sup>1</sup>

Not only has Christianity nothing to offer beyond a vague promise of retribution beyond the grave, but it has proved a barren soil for even the few seeds which by mere accident have been deposited among its records. Nothing would seem more absurd, for instance, than that the precepts of Jesus should enter into politics even in times of peace, let alone when nations are engaged in deadly combat with each other.

"What is wanted," we should be told, if the suggestion were at all deemed worthy of an answer, "are wisdom and statesmanship."

It is the result of Christian teaching that the counsels of Jesus are, by general consent, regarded as the least likely source where to find either.

And yet I will risk it, and say that not only can the needed guidance be found there, but that it can be found nowhere else. I will undertake to show that as regards human conduct no other philosophy has ever yet been so completely based on, and deduced from, the actualities of life as the despised "sayings" of the Nazarene Sage.

I will submit the philosophy of Jesus to the severest test imaginable. I propose to use the present world-war as my object-lesson, and compare what has actually been done in connection therewith with what should have been done had the counsels of Jesus, rather than those of some Machiavelli, prevailed.

I shall make this comparison not from any moral or sentimental point of view, which—thanks to centuries of Christian training—could provoke derision only; but from

<sup>1</sup> As the objection is almost sure to be raised in certain quarters that Paul was concerned about man's "spiritual" rather than his "secular" welfare, I will once more point out that no such distinction can be drawn. Paul promised nothing different from what are called "secular comforts"—i.e. peace and plenty. The only difference between the "spiritualism" of Paul and the "secularism" of Jesus is that Paul's promises would materialize on the other side of the grave only, whereas Jesus sought to establish "the kingdom of God" *here and now*. But there is a true spiritualism in the teachings of Jesus—the cultivation of the soul and mind, the "laying up of treasures which neither moth nor rust can corrupt"—which is lacking in the fanciful speculations of Paul.

a strictly *utilitarian* standpoint, and in terms of "profit and loss of effective war material"—i.e. of life or treasure—agreeably to the prevailing "practical" spirit of the times. And thus will I challenge a comparison of the combined wisdom of all the statesmen of the world with the simple common-sense philosophy of the "Galilean Peasant."

But to make such a comparison possible it will be necessary to strip both facts and doctrines of all that is foreign or irrelevant. We must drop all the social jargon and conventional embellishments of speech which are apt to make ugly things appear in bright colours, and state the facts in plain, unvarnished, and unequivocal language.

The first question to be dealt with is, How did this conflagration which has set Europe ablaze break out?

Observe, please, that I am not asking what has *caused* the war, but only what has started it. For with all its terrors and complications this war is an incident only in a struggle which has lasted ever since brute prehistoric man tried to wrest from his neighbour the fruits of his toil. Much has already been written about the cause of this war; more is yet to follow from historians and "experts"—diplomatic, military, economic, industrial, and financial. But the real cause of this and every other war we shall presently be able to state in the Teacher's words whose counsels have hitherto been regarded with derision by statesmen and philosophers alike.

Once more then: What has started this war? The plain and unsophisticated facts are these: A married couple, dear no doubt to their family and friends, but otherwise of no special importance to the rest of mankind, were murdered in a town of Southern Europe where—I mention this only as a matter of fact, and not in any way as justifying the crime—they were neither invited nor welcome guests.

An old man felt himself aggrieved by the foul deed. Not really because of the loss of two dear relatives; that he might have born with resignation, as he bore the loss of his only son, or that of the mother of his children, both of whom fell by the assassin's hand. Nor because

he could have been shocked by the sinfulness of murder : for did he not himself sign death-warrants by the dozen, ordering in cold blood the assassination of political opponents ?

No ; what outraged this old man was, according to published accounts, that he saw in the murder of the couple "an insult to his house." This was more than his Christian humility—publicly exhibited once every year by touching with a wet sponge the previously well cleansed feet of some paupers—could endure ; and forgetting all about the injunction against the *lex talionis*, as well as the warning that he who uses the sword runs the risk of perishing by the sword, unsheathed the murderous weapon and snorted vengeance.

The rest need concern us no further in these pages.

The double murder was an outrage, of course, for which no words of condemnation could be too strong. But do not let us be hypnotized into seeing in the incident more than there is in it. The crime consisted in the *killing of human beings*—in disobeying the commandment "Thou shalt not kill"—and not in any insult offered to the imperial dignity of a senile monarch. It would have been no less a crime had the victims been inoffensive peasants instead of people who arrogated to themselves prerogatives to which they had no natural rights, and which are acquired and defended by brute force only.

The question will here be asked, Should the murder have been left unavenged ? But that is not the first nor the most important problem arising out of the incident. The first question should be, Why was that crime committed at all ? And the answer to it is, To avenge *some prior act of violence* ; to exact a tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye.

Whether the wrong which the misguided youth sought to avenge was real or imaginary, or whether the murdered couple were in any way responsible for it, is quite immaterial as far as the question at issue is concerned. Quite probably the victims of his vengeance were—individually—as guiltless of the wrong which he sought to avenge as were undoubtedly most—if not all—of the millions of



Serbians on whom the enraged monarch sought to wreak *his* vengeance.

The young man of Serajevo and the old man of Vienna were both swayed by a like passion. Assuming that Francis Joseph had no aggressive motives besides, then both were actuated by identical motives, and both could plead the same justification : that is, " to punish a crime so as to prevent its recurrence."

The outstanding facts are that both have sought to avenge a prior act of violence ; and if we cared to trace step by step each grievance to its cause, we should find that each such act was intended to avenge a prior similar act, until we come—let us suppose so—to an act of unprovoked aggression as the source of all the subsequent misdeeds.

We might then reverse the process, and from such a retrospect turn toward the future to contemplate what is bound to be the outcome of either an unprovoked act of aggression or of a policy of retaliation, and then compare the counsels of Jesus with the philosophy of violence.

Does not the reader perceive already that the principle involved is not one of piety, sentiment, or of justice even, but of practical *common sense* ? What else can be expected from a policy of retaliation than an endless succession of acts of violence ? He who uses the sword will meet with another sword. And if a man is still foolish enough to think that he can contrive a weapon which shall give him ultimate and final mastery over his opponents, he must be woefully ignorant of the teachings of history.

What are the lessons—one feels almost tempted to ask what are the *unmistakable* lessons—which history teaches concerning this policy of aggression or retaliation ? For they are manifest to anyone whose vision is not dimmed by false conceptions or perverted morals, and may be summarized in a few brief sentences.

The object of the aggressor has always been to wrest from his neighbour any material advantage which the latter possessed.

The commandments " Thou shalt not envy," " Thou shalt not steal," " Thou shalt not kill," have not been a

sufficient restraint, because they were supposed—and are still supposed—to be meant for the protection of the neighbour only, and—provided one was strong enough—their observance did not always seem expedient.

Force, therefore, became a necessity for both offence and defence, and so everybody armed himself for attack and stockaded his homestead for defence. War is an ancient art which has its roots in ignorant savagedom.

The present cry is armaments. It was also the cry of brute, primeval man, who saw success in brute force only, and consequently sought to provide himself with better weapons than those possessed by any possible antagonist. It is thus that the bludgeon gave way to bow and arrow, which in their turn were replaced by firearms. Then came in rapid succession the “high achievements of science and civilization”: the breech-loader was superseded by the needle-gun, this by the rifle, the rifle by the machine gun, and so forth, up to the most cunning devices for murder and destruction of the present day.

These are not achievements of wisdom. They still are and for ever must remain what they were originally: the *expedients of the unreasoning savage*, who could think of brute force only to achieve any desired end. For what has been the result of all these discoveries? This, that *the inventor has taught his opponent how to attack him*.

Many learned treatises have been written on the art of warfare, on methods of attack and defence, but one single sentence of the despised Carpenter of Galilee nullifies all their reasoning and sweeps away their conclusions as completely as the morning mists dissolve before the rays of the rising sun.

The sentence is:—

With whatsoever measure ye mete, it shall be measured out unto you.

Dreadnoughts, submarines, aircraft, poison-gas, liquid fire, mortars, hand-grenades: what was the result of all these inventions except supplying the enemy—looked at from whichever standpoint—with more dreadful weapons of attack? But still this foolish policy is being pursued, and our spiritual “leaders” are wringing their hands in

despair because of their inability to find any guidance in the "sayings" of their Master.

They admit themselves their utter failure. What is wanted just now, they say, is "action, not sentiment; statesmanship, and not religion." And so these blind leaders of the blind acquiesce in yet greater blunders, and submissively consent to yet greater terrors. Women must be pressed into service so as to liberate every man capable of bearing arms. "We want more men!" is the cry. But alas! the same cry is raised in the opposition camp.

"Let us scatter the seeds of pestilence in the form of bacilli over the enemy country" is the latest proposal of our enemies, a nation which prides itself on its learning. But if they think they will succeed by such means any better than have warriors in the past—ancient or modern—they have studied human history to very little purpose. Even seeming successes were temporary only. The struggles have been renewed again so soon as the stricken enemy felt he was strong enough to avenge himself. And when that was impossible, there would come along someone else, tempted maybe by the successes of the conqueror, and offer to take from the victor his plunder in the same way as he acquired it himself.

The warning that he who uses the sword will perish by the sword is neither theory nor sentiment. *It is an indisputable fact of history*, the lesson of which our statesmen have yet to learn.

The lesson is that "With whatsoever measure ye mete, it will be measured out unto you"—that force will be met by force, cunning by cunning, violence by violence, as surely as you are followed by your own shadow.

It is here where the clergy have failed to interpret the Master. They taught that acting justly towards a neighbour was a virtue which demanded *self-sacrifice*, whereas it is a *necessity* for *self-defence*. They did not teach, because they did not know it themselves, that it was *to their own interest* that people should mete out to their neighbours such treatment only as they would desire to receive themselves; that their harvest will

depend on their sowing. Yet not only had they the clear teachings of their Master to guide them, but the whole of history to confirm the truth of his teachings.

Let us take a single instance only from the present war as an example. Never before has hatred between belligerents been more intense than it is at present between Germans and Britons. The Germans in particular have raised their hatred to a cult, and would exterminate every man who had an English mother. Why do they not do so to the thousands of British prisoners now in their power? Why do they actually allow the agents of neutral countries to inspect their prison-camps, with a view of having it testified that they are treating the enemy in their midst humanely? Is it merely an act of grace—of piety—on their part? Or is it not rather an act of necessity, so as to ward off retaliation? Are all these lessons lost on the philosophers of this proud century?

There is much more in the counsels of Jesus than either priest, prince, or philosopher has so far been able to discover in them. They are the result of the common experience of mankind, and are rooted in common sense. History consists of an unbroken chain of incidents which confirm the truth and wisdom of these teachings.

Henry Thomas Buckle made the attempt to write the History of Civilization, but failed because he had no theory, no principle to guide him. Had he adopted the philosophy of Jesus, he could have shown—what indeed he intended to do—that the evolution of society, including its morals and sentiments, was as much the result of necessity as were the phenomena of the physical universe; and that history supplied an unbroken series of object-lessons illustrative and confirmatory of the contentions of Jesus.

Violence has ever led to fresh acts of violence, and retaliation to fresh feuds. Sometime, somehow, these feuds will have to come to an end before peace is possible. A reconciliation will have to take place in the end. That is the conclusion of reflecting wisdom; whereas retaliation is dictated by the instincts of the unreasoning brute.

Let us test this generalization by present happenings. Supposing that this policy of mutual destruction has been carried as far as possible; supposing that as many people have been killed or maimed, and as many towns have been devastated as the physical means at the disposal of the contending nations will enable them to do, what is to be the ultimate end of the feud? What is in the end to succeed this devastating storm?

Signs are not wanting as to the lessons to be learnt from this costly experiment. Thinking men are beginning to reflect and to ask themselves the question whither all this destruction of life and treasure is to lead, and I am culling the following almost at random from a morning paper now before me:—

The war teaches with terrible distinctness that peace cannot be assured in Europe or anywhere else merely by means of treaties and of the conventions or agreements miscalled international law. War must be prevented by force exerted by a few nations which unitedly and firmly determine that there shall be no more war *and no more aggression upon any nation by another if they can prevent it.*

But is that not precisely what Jesus said nineteen centuries ago?

“No more aggression”—“respect for the rights of others”—“freedom for all”—“international arbitration”—“universal disarmament”—“no more war” are the watchwords one meets in the press, or in the utterances of public men.

Let us contrast with these belated conclusions some of the derided “sayings” of Jesus. What were his counsels? Here is a summary of them: Do all in your power to live at peace with your neighbour. Make him your friend, rather than your enemy. If he is offended with thee, try to reconcile him. If he should offend thee, do not resent it, but meet his anger with forbearance, his illwill with kindness, his hatred with love. Return good for evil, that you may show yourself the worthier of his friendship. Never do aught to your neighbour that you would not like him to do to you. Think more of *your obligations* to him than of *his duties* towards

yourself. Exhibit first yourself the conduct which you would expect from others. Remove first the beam from thine own eye, before attempting to extract the mote from thy neighbour's eye.

And do all these things not for any sentimental reasons, but because on your conduct depends your own welfare ; because the harvest which you are to gather depends on the seeds which you are sowing.

" Wherefore I say unto you, Agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him ; lest at any time the adversary deliver *thee* to the judge and the judge deliver *thee* to the officer, and *thou* be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, *Thou* shalt by no means come out thence till *thou* hast paid the uttermost penalty."

Wiseacres say that these are the counsels of a dreamer. But what do these " practical men " hope to gain by their reckless, brainless methods ? How far can this policy of destruction be carried ? It cannot last for ever. How is it to end ? " By making peace," is the answer. But what does " making peace " mean ? If it is to be peace, and not merely a temporary armistice, it can mean only agreement between the combatants *to respect each other's rights* : " You leave me alone, and I will leave you alone. You respect what is mine, and I will respect what is yours. Do not menace me and mine, and I will not menace you and yours."

In short, in the end even the most stupid and most savage brute is bound to obey the injunctions of Jesus, *because there is no other way*.

Not piety ; not sentiment ; not because you might inflict suffering on an enemy : but *because it is in your own interest* to do so, that you should avoid by every means in your power quarrels with your neighbour. Let it be your first concern to befriend him ; let this take precedence even before worship and sacrifice :—

Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar and there rememberest that thy brother has aught *against thee*, leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way ; *first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift*.

Could anything be plainer or more to the point? Moreover, is not each one of these counsels in direct line of social evolution? Is it possible that these devastating wars can teach any other lessons? *Is it at all conceivable* that the much desired "peace on earth and goodwill towards man" could ever be realized in any other way?

But if the counsels of Jesus were right, does it not follow that those who profess to be his messengers are wrong?

## CHAPTER XLI

FALSE PROPHETS (*continued*)

He that is void of wisdom despiseth his neighbour: but a man of understanding holdeth his peace.—PROV. xi 12.

And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? . . . Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and *then shalt thou see* clearly to cast out the mote out of thy *brother's eye*.—MATT. vii. 3-5.

LET us return to our object-lesson—the spark which has set Europe ablaze.

The murderer of Serajevo and the avenger of the murder in Vienna have both rejected the counsels of Jesus as “impracticable,” and both have received their “reward.”

Both have been actuated by a like motive: that of revenge. At least we will assume this to have been the case with Francis Joseph also, as it evidently was with the misguided youth who committed the murder. Let us charitably suppose that the aged Emperor had no sordid motives besides; that he drew the sword against the Serbians solely to prevent similar outrages in the future. Having thus put the most favourable interpretation on the monarch's deed, let us ask these questions: Has he succeeded in achieving his object? Was there any reasonable hope that he might succeed? Is there a tittle of evidence in the history of the past to justify such a hope?

Never yet has crime been put down by crime. Nor has a tyrant ever yet succeeded in conquering a people by the sword. At most he subjugated them and kept them in subjection for a time, until the people could throw off the yoke, or until some other adventurer drove him from power in the same way. Hence it is that every



world-empire came to grief in the same way as it had been established.

And that is precisely what Jesus meant when he said that he who uses the sword will perish by the sword. He simply generalized the facts of experience.

By all means let us be "practical." By all means let us take the facts as we find them and deduce from them what may or what should be done to accomplish certain desirable results. By all means let us turn our back on the theorist who in the teeth of past experiences insists on trying to achieve the impossible by means which have proved disastrous as often as they have been tried. But first let us learn to discriminate between the true and the false; the real and the illusory; the adept and the quacksalver.

Let the reader place the counsels of Jesus in juxtaposition with those of the Machiavellis and Bernhardis; let him contrast the doctrine of Non-Resistance<sup>1</sup>—i.e. non-retaliation—with the philosophy of force; let him test the wisdom of each in the light of past experiences as recorded in history, and then let him form his own judgment as to which system is more in consonance with the actualities of experience. For experience alone can teach us what is "practicable."

There are two kinds of "idealisms." In one sense it means *the perfect state* of something which is theoretically possible; and in another sense it means a fanciful conception of something which is unreal and unrealizable. The ideals of Jesus are of the former kind; those of the wiseacres who would "conquer the kingdom of heaven with violence" are of the latter.

Jesus has never yet been understood. Few people only have ever tried to understand him; but least of all those who kneel before his image, calling out loudly "Lord, Lord," but do not heed his counsels.

Jesus has been represented as a dreamer, a sacerdotalist who attached no value to this life, nor heeded the affairs

<sup>1</sup> I shall deal presently with the phrase, which has been as misunderstood and misinterpreted as the passage which has been rendered "Take no thought for the morrow."

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of this world · a character which is the very opposite of the real Jesus. No thinker has ever penetrated more deeply into the problems of life and society, or has more thoroughly or more correctly generalized the facts of experience. All his precepts and counsels are deduced from, and based on, generalizations which are self-evident as soon as stated.

“Love thy neighbour as thyself”; “Love thine enemies”; “Return good for evil,” etc., are not merely pious sentiments of a sacerdotalist, but the counsels of wisdom based on an intelligent appreciation of the universal experience of mankind. All the facts of history prove the truth of these generalizations, and the wisdom of the counsels deduced from them. And no matter how our statesmen may scorn such advice, in the end they are forced by sheer necessity to adopt and to obey it—not as an act of “piety” (in the theological sense), but out of necessity.

It is not “sentiment” or “piety” which makes belligerents, bent on destroying each other, feed the hated foe whom they have captured—especially when the captor is himself short of food and not overscrupulous—any more than it is “sentiment” which keeps ravening wolves from trying to devour each other. We are taught our morals as we are taught the necessity of feeding or of seeking shelter.

We *must* “love our enemies,” not for *their* sake, but our own; for—it cannot be repeated too often—as we do to them, so they will do to us.

But—the reader will ask—is the principle applicable in practical politics? The answer is that not only is this possible, but *without it no statesmanship has ever been successful*. If the reader doubts this, let him read history and apply its lessons as a physicist would interpret the facts of nature: that is, by generalizing the facts of history first, and then interpreting them by help of these generalizations—as *did Jesus*.

Take by way of object-lessons the conduct of India, Ireland, and the quite recently conquered provinces of South Africa. Each of these has ranged itself on the

side of the Empire, and voluntarily offered its help to resist a foe who would gladly have lent a helping hand to any of them to free themselves of British dominance and to avenge their former subjugation.

Why did they not seize the opportunity? In each of these provinces there were a few malcontents who were inclined to do so. Why? And why have their projects failed? What has turned the former enemies of Great Britain into friends in the hour of her need—which seemed so favourable an opportunity for revolt and revenge?

The answer is obvious to anyone who will take the trouble to read history with open eyes and an open mind. These people had been *subjugated* in the past by the sword, and thus made into enemies. Fair treatment, kindness, love and justice have subsequently *conquered* them by turning their hatred into friendship. And the attempted revolts of the few malcontents were but so many sporadic eruptions of the still festering, though now happily healing, wounds which had been inflicted in the past.

Compare with this the attitude of the Czechs, Slavs, and Poles who have been under Austrian dominance for centuries; of the Albanians under Turkish rule; or of the Poles and Alsatians under the German heel. Nay, ransack the whole of history, and you cannot find a single instance which would justify—from a strictly utilitarian point of view—the policy of violence, whether for the purpose of aggression or of retaliation. People have been *subjugated*, but never yet *conquered*, by the sword.

And is not the present calamity—if carefully analysed and rightly interpreted—only another vindication of the wisdom of Jesus, and a condemnation of the policy of force?

Supposing the clock could be put back to the time when the ultimatum of Austria to Serbia was under consideration. Supposing that Francis Joseph, or his advisers, could reconsider their decision in the light of this latest lesson of history; is there any doubt as to which course the offended monarch would take? Or is there a sane man who can doubt for one moment which course he should have taken had he been guided by wisdom

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rather than passion; by the counsels of the Sage of Nazareth rather than by the hare-brained doctrine of might?

Francis Joseph went to the altar thinking of his own grievances only, and not of what "his brother" might have *against himself*. With hatred in his heart he invoked the aid of "the God of vengeance"; probably mumbled—as conventionality required him to do—the prayer "Forgive us our trespasses, *as we forgive them who trespass against us*," but without any more intelligence than had it been repeated by a parrot, and received the approval of his statesmen and the benediction of his equally ignorant and obsequious priests.

Yet what an impressive and instructive sermon the latter might have preached to their imperial master from such texts as—"Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote which is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."

So far I have considered the matter from the monarch's standpoint only, which is the narrow conventional view. But, needless to say, the issues are of a much wider scope—so vast, indeed, that the personality of the monarch should be—according to merits—of the least and last consideration.

The question whether Francis Joseph was right in demanding reparation from a neighbouring State for an act committed by one of his own "subjects" (whose affection he had failed to secure) should not be raised at all. Nor is it of any consequence whether Francis Joseph acted justly or unjustly, wisely or unwisely. The supreme question is whether he—or any man living—should have the *power* to do what he did. Whether it is safe—or

"practical," to use the cant phrase of politicians—that an individual should be in a position to command millions of his fellow-men to desert hearth and home, forsake parents, wife, or children, and—against their own will or judgment—put their lives at the disposal of a potentate who, at best, would use them to avenge a personal grievance; or, at worst, to subjugate yet other people who are unwilling to submit to his dominance.

Such questions go to the root of the problem, and supply their own inevitable answer.

Nineteen centuries ago the Sage of Nazareth asked the same question, and the conclusion he reached was that such power possessed by any man was an abuse, which was bound to bring affliction in its wake (Matt. xviii. 7), and therefore advised the people not to tolerate any potentate to rule over them: to have *servants* only and not *masters*.

Again I ask, is not this the lesson which mankind is slowly learning by centuries of dearly bought experience? Is it not the lesson which this present devastating war is teaching the nations? The world over, the outcry is at present for "constitutionalism," for "popular control" of policy; for the dominance of "the will of the people," and so forth; which are only variants of the counsels of Jesus not to have "rulers," but only "servants."

Compare these despised doctrines with those which masquerade as "statesmanship," and both with the teachings of history and the trend of the times, and then judge which is the "practical" and which the "fantastic" or "visionary" philosophy.

It is not an affair of kings, but a *world-problem*; and as such Jesus conceived and considered it. Hence it did not commend itself to those who, from the low level of animalism, were pursuing a selfish, parochial policy, making their own interest antagonistic to that of the rest of mankind instead of making it identical with it. They failed to perceive that the permanent well-being of the unit depended on the prosperity of the larger whole.

It is because of this difference in outlook and in diagnosis that the methods recommended by Jesus differ so widely

from accepted standards of statesmanship, and from accepted notions generally.

Jesus was not a dreamer, but a *seer* in the most literal sense of the word—"a light which shone in the darkness, and the darkness perceived it not." It is the priests and statesmen who are the false prophets, the blind leaders of the blind.

## CHAPTER XLII

### THE GREAT STUMBLING-BLOCK

Ye have heard that it has been said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth ; but I say unto you that you *resent not an offence*. But whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also ; and if any man will sue thee at law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also—MATT. v. 38-9 (Author's Translation).

THE injunction "Resist not evil" is undoubtedly the greatest stumbling-block in the ethics of Jesus. It is always cited as conclusive proof of the impracticability of his teachings.

The common interpretation put upon it is that Jesus enjoined absolute and unconditional submission to any kind of abuse or ill-treatment, without offering any resistance whatsoever. If this were a correct interpretation of what he meant, the exhortation would be not only impracticable, but irrational.

It does not seem to have occurred to these pedants of literalness that such an interpretation was not only contrary to common sense, but *incompatible with the life and teachings of Jesus* : since his life-work consisted almost solely in denouncing evil and evil-doers, and in the end he paid the extreme penalty for doing so. He attacked and opposed not only wrong-doers of the baser and grosser kind, but those who "sat in Moses' seat" and who "outwardly appeared righteous unto men." He denounced "rulers" and "magnates" for oppressing the people, and insisted that "every tree which did not bring forth good fruit" should be utterly destroyed. Tradition credits him with having, on one occasion at least, resorted even to physical force to suppress evil.

But these considerations apart, and assuming—for

argument's sake only—that the English version of this passage is a correct rendering of the words actually used by Jesus, the context itself is sufficient to make one doubt whether the interpretation put upon them is the right one. For it is obvious that what Jesus condemned was not “resisting evil,” but exacting an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth; or, in plain language, *retaliation*. But condemning retaliation does not necessarily mean that evil-doers should not be restrained. There is a vast difference between saying “Do not retaliate” or “Do not be vindictive” and “Do not interfere with evil-doers” or “Tolerate evil.” The life and character of Jesus forbid such an interpretation.

It is quite unthinkable, for instance, that he who at risk of his life denounced in such unequivocal terms “the whited sepulchres who sat in Moses’ seat” for deeds which he thought were productive of evil, could himself have stood by with folded arms while an obvious ruffian robbed a widow or ill-treated a child, much less exhort others not to restrain evil-doers. Such conduct would not only be unnatural and reprehensible, but would constitute a person who could witness such deeds with passive unconcern an accessory to the crime.

We must, therefore, once more suspect the correctness of the translation.

We do not know, of course, what were the exact words used by Jesus, since it is a translation only of what he said, or may have said, that we possess. But there is no need to go further than the Greek version to show that the English rendering of the passage is far from being unobjectionable. Yet it is the English text which is mainly responsible for the irrational construction which has been put upon it.

The Greek sentence which has been rendered “Resist not evil” is one of those untranslatable colloquial phrases that are to be found in every language, the meaning of which is conventional rather than etymological, and is conveyed by the context rather than the words composing it.

The English phrase “to take in” may serve as an



example. It may mean literally what the words imply, or it may mean "to afford shelter" or "to deceive," according to the context. Such colloquialisms are untranslatable, and their meaning must be rendered in other languages by corresponding phrases.

The Greek word *antistēnai*, which has been rendered "resist," belongs to this class of phrases for which an exact equivalent does not exist in English; for it does not express a definite meaning, but conveys a general idea of "opposition." It is compounded of the preposition *anti*—the meaning of which is the same as in English—and the verb *histēmi*, which—among many other things—may mean, according to the context: *to set up*; *set upright*; *to raise up* (as the mast in a ship); *to raise or erect buildings*; *to raise, put in commotion*; *to begin a quarrel*, etc.<sup>1</sup>

The other word which has been rendered *evil* is a derivative of *ponērōs*, which means *causing pain* or *hardship*; in a moral sense, *bad*, *worthless*, *villainous*, *knarish*, *wicked*.<sup>2</sup> Hence an *injury* or *offence*.

The correct meaning of the sentence, *Mē antistēnai to ponerō*, depends, therefore, on the context. Fortunately this does not leave us in any doubt as to what Jesus meant by these words, for they were to express the *opposite* of the ancient rule "an eye for an eye," or *retaliation*. The sentence, therefore, would be more correctly rendered "Do not retaliate" (i.e. return evil for evil), or—better still—"Do not resent an offence" or "*an injury*."

This rendering not only is in conformity with the Greek text, but is supported by all the other precepts of the Sermon on the Mount; e.g. "return good for evil"; "love your enemies"; "do good to them that hate you," etc. But all this is far from saying that evil should be tolerated. On the contrary: Jesus condemned retaliation because he held it was an evil itself, which in most cases led to yet greater evils than was the original offence which it was intended to avenge. The whole philosophy of Jesus was directed *against evil*, and not to protect it.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon, 11th ed.

<sup>2</sup> This

The elucidatory examples which follow the exhortation may be regarded as exaggerations to give emphasis to the precept by a method which was quite peculiar to Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus was fond of parable and metaphor: he seldom spoke in any other way. But hyperbole is essential to this form of reasoning, since it is the exaggeration which in such forms of address gives emphasis to the argument.

Thus we get the absurdly exaggerated—and therefore *all the more telling*—contrast between a *mote* and a *beam* in the human eye; or “straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel” “A camel passing through the eye of a needle”; “a city set on a hill cannot be hid”; “a candle put under a bushel”; “a mustard seed which grows into a tree”; “plucking out an offending eye,” or “cutting off an offending limb” are all cases in point.

This form of reasoning may have been adopted by Jesus so as to reach the masses, and to it may be due his great popularity as an orator. He relied chiefly on hyperbole for his oratorical effects. Hence contrast and exaggeration abound in all his discourses.

In heaven, for instance, there will be more joy over *one* repentant sinner than over *ninety-nine* just persons. We should forgive not *seven times* seven times, but *seventy times* seven times. So, likewise, merely “to look at a woman to lust after her” is tantamount to adultery; and to say to a brother “Thou fool” shall make the offender liable to hell-fire.

It cannot be correct, therefore, to put such a literal interpretation on the words “Resist not evil,” even if they were a correct rendering of the Greek text, notwithstanding the examples which follow the injunction *by way of emphasis*.

But so soon as we substitute “Resent not” or “Do not retaliate” for “Resist not,” all doubt as to what

<sup>1</sup> In this connection we must not forget that Jesus was addressing the ignorant masses, and had to suit his language to the occasion. As he himself explained to his more intimate followers: “Therefore do I speak to them in parables, because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.”

Jesus meant vanishes. It is then no longer an absurdity which he bids us to observe, but wise counsel endorsed by experience and common sense.

It is curious—though by no means a mere accident—that the present brutal war should afford the most telling confirmation of the wisdom of this most derided of all the counsels of Jesus. Yet such is the case.

A ruthless and truculent enemy has introduced weapons and methods of warfare hitherto held to be inadmissible among civilized people. He committed outrages against established customs at which the civilized world stood aghast, and which were provocative of resentment in the extreme. Yet both the Government and the majority of the people of this country have *withstood retaliation*, as much for practical as for sentimental reasons; because—to use a current vulgarism—“*it does not pay.*”

On the other hand, the people of this country (probably without being aware of the fact) have actually obeyed the no less scorned injunction which Jesus substituted for retaliation: “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you,” as the following incident so brilliantly illustrates.

There came to this island home some of the detested enemies, hated as probably enemy has never been hated before. There was no question as to their object: they came to kill and to cause as much misery as they could by dropping bombs from the air. Their floating craft caught fire, and the would-be murderers came to earth, among those whom they intended to destroy, as so many lifeless bodies.

There was a time when, in similar circumstances, the people would have danced round the corpses of the vanquished enemy. There was a time when Christians, with the sanction of the Church, buried the remains of criminals at cross-roads, without any religious rites—unless the driving of a stake through the dead body as a visible sign of abhorrence could be regarded as such.

It is impossible to think of an enemy more deserving of hatred than were these raiders of the air, nor of cir-

cumstances more calculated to rouse the spirit of revenge. The invaders were of those people who had cast mourning over the land ; who had themselves come to kill and to destroy. There were the memories of the *Lusitania*, of Miss Cavell, of Captain Fryatt, of the innocent women and children who were wantonly killed by these very men in former raids.

Yet what did we do to the remains of these people who came to this country with the lust of murder in their heart and a hymn of hate on their lips ?

Reader, bare your head in devotion and respect before those truly heroic people who, notwithstanding all these wicked deeds of a ruthless enemy, were brave enough to conquer their passions and to give decent burial to their dead foemen. They buried them with such military honours as the circumstances would permit, the people performing the ceremony only remembering for the moment that these coffins contained the dead bodies of so many mothers' sons.

How many of those who stood round those graves with bared head remembered that they were then actually obeying an injunction which, at other times, seemed to them to be ridiculous and impossible to comply with ?

In that act the people were "laying up treasures" which neither moth nor rust can corrupt and which thieves cannot steal. They have sown seeds which will bear fruit long after the incident itself is forgotten ; just as the impulse which has led to such conduct has been the result of similar sowings in the long-forgotten past.

It is to the laying up of this kind of uncorruptible and *imperishable treasures* during the ages that mankind owes its greatest and dearest treasures of to-day : *humanity* and *civilization*. It is by such "investments" only that salvation can come to man.

The German papers—we have been told—recorded the fact of the burial "without comment." That simple act of magnanimity did what our powerful batteries failed to accomplish : it silenced for the moment the "Hymn of Hate."

The same leaven is working among our foes. Or, to

use a more appropriate simile, the same light is penetrating the darkness which envelops our opponents as it does the rest of mankind. Slowly only does it dawn on them that they are pursuing a wrong path; that in thus "seeking their life, they are losing it"; that salvation does not come with enmity, but with forbearance.

The following excerpt from a German paper<sup>1</sup> may be taken as a sign of the breaking dawn:—

We desire, therefore, that Europe shall live—not only Germany, but also other nations which have contributed so much to the advance of civilization and can still do much for it. We desire that France shall live, and we should see with sincere grief this country, which we have never hated, bleeding to death. *In the interests of Germany, France, Russia, and England we wish for peace—peace for the whole bleeding world.*

But that is obtainable in one way only: by keeping the commandments. Which?

Thou shalt do no murder; thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not bear false witness; honour thy father and thy mother; and *thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

Are these merely "*temporal*," "*secular*" matters which we can afford to disregard or to sneer at?

Whoever thinks so has no conception of the *truly spiritual*; <sup>2</sup> is as far from "the kingdom of heaven" as was Saul of Tarsus. "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

<sup>1</sup> *Vorwärts* in October 1916, through *Daily News*.

<sup>2</sup> As distinct from *post mortem* or *ghostly*.

## CHAPTER XLIII

### LIGHT AT LAST

Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law ?

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

This is the first and great commandment.

*But the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

*On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*

My task is done, though the work which I have commenced is far from finished. Indeed, it is scarcely more than begun. All that I may claim to have accomplished is to have cut a path through the jungle of ignorance and superstition ; to have discovered in the depth of this dark forest indications of a buried city ; to have cleared the site and laid bare the ruins of an ancient temple—the temple of wisdom, life, and light.

Even this work is not quite complete. Further excavations will have to be made before this relic of the past can be studied in all its aspects.

The foundations, as far as they have been uncovered, are solid, sound, and of unmistakable design. But there is a mass of loose material scattered about which requires careful sorting out and identification. This task, however, I must leave to more competent hands.

I have worked with pick and shovel, and now and then had to use a coarse broom. More delicate instruments are now required, as well as better trained eyes and hands, to pick out from the loose lumber those fragments which once formed part of the original edifice or its furnishings, and to separate these from the mass of rubbish which has been accumulating during the centuries of decay. For on the ruins of this temple children of darkness

have erected strange altars and worshipped idols brought thither from the heathen fanes of foreign lands.

Much work has yet to be done before the ancient structure can be restored to what it was—or rather to what it was intended to be; for the edifice had never been completed. The plan, indeed, seems to have been perfect in conception, with every detail well thought out; but it was too vast an undertaking for one man. Competent helpers were few, the obstacles great, and the opponents of the scheme too powerful.

To change the metaphor: it was a life-and-death struggle between Ormazd and Ahriman; the former planting methodically seeds of wisdom, truth, and kindness, and the latter scattering freely and plentifully the seeds of envy, discord, enmity, and all manner of iniquity.

The sowings of Ahriman grew much faster in the virgin soil than did those of Ormazd, which could thrive in prepared ground only; and so the fields were overrun with a vigorous growth of noxious weeds. But underneath the thorns and thistles, the seedlings of the much more slowly growing, but all the more enduring, giant perennials planted by Ormazd sent their rootlets down into the ground, there to gain strength and in time to raise their branching crowns high above the weeds which threatened to choke them.

Ahriman triumphed for a time—a long time, as measured by human standards; but to Ormazd belongs the final victory. Already we can see the breaking of the dawn, the rays of light penetrating and dispelling the fogs of ignorance and superstition.

Let us rest a while, and in the light of day which now illuminates the scene of our explorations let us survey what lies revealed before us and balance one against the other, what we have gained and what we have lost by our daring enterprise.

Around us lie shattered many icons of gods and demi-gods, variously disguised, but which, nevertheless, are identifiable as the gods of ancient Egypt, Babylon, Persia, or Hellas, in new vestures and under new names. Among

these images there are many effigies of "Christ," shattered beyond repair. But it is the icons only, the products of the human artificer, the *things* of clay or wood, which have been demolished.

That which made these images dear to us—our *love* of him which made us reverence these caricatures—has been enhanced rather than diminished by the removal of this sorry lumber.

We have destroyed an incomprehensible *man-god* fashioned of wood or clay; but instead we have gained the *divine man*. We have parted with a *deception* in exchange for a *reality*. And the exchange is for the better.

It has always been the lofty ideals of Jesus, his deep love and human sympathies, his sweet character and disposition, which have appealed to the heart of man; and the cruel teachings of Christian doctrines, the enforcement of unnatural obligations and vague unrealizable promises, which have repelled so many. We have got rid of the latter only; the former are still ours—are ours more than they ever were before. We have sacrificed nothing that is good and precious in the religion of Jesus. On the contrary, we can see now wisdom as well as beauty; truth as well as right sentiment.

Nor need we sacrifice aught which time and habit have endeared to us—not a sentiment—not even the name *Christ*. Those to whom the preacher of the Sermon on the Mount has been endeared by that name may continue to call him by that or any other cognomen. For the essence of the religion of Jesus does not consist in phrases and ceremonials, but in *deeds*. "Not everyone that says Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that *doeth* the will of my Father which is in heaven."

What is that *will*? What are we required to do to enter into life—to "inherit the kingdom of heaven"?

We are not left in any doubt as to the answer. The *law* is laid down for us in the passage quoted at the head of this chapter.

Anyone who still entertains any doubt how to interpret



these two commandments will find explicit directions in the answer which Jesus gave to the disciple who asked a similar question (Matt. xix. 18-19); in the Sermon on the Mount; and more emphatically still in the Parable of the Last Judgment (Matt. xxv. 34-40). There the directions how to obey "the two Great Commandments in the law" are most explicit. There it is laid down beyond any possibility of doubt that the "king"—which in the parable stands for the "Father in heaven"—can be hallowed only by serving "his children": *For inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these ye have done it unto me.*

As for creeds, beliefs, or rituals, they are not so much as mentioned. They are neither banned nor required—and that is the great merit of the religion of Jesus; for it makes it possible for people of most diverse opinions to carry out its behests without doing violence to their convictions. People may continue to observe any harmless rites they have been accustomed to, or believe any cosmogony which appeals to their understanding. Religion does not consist in ceremonials or beliefs, but in the observance of *our obligations to our neighbours.*

Under the ægis of the universal "Fatherhood of God" and "brotherhood of man" all people, of whatever race, creed, or colour, can unite in *one religion*, as catholic as are the already established sciences, without having to sacrifice whatever is distinctive of nationality or of individuality.

Then—and then only—the "kingdom of heaven" shall have come, and the will of the Father will be "done on earth as it is in heaven." Righteousness shall then reign, and "all these things" which the people have vainly been seeking to obtain by force or fraud, strife and iniquity, "shall be added unto them" in addition to the blessings of peace and goodwill. "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them,"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xi. 6.

## LIGHT AT LAST

Here, then, we have arrived at the gates of the millennium—the dreamland of the human race. Shall we ever enter it?

The answer must come from the Churches. This is their opportunity. They, and they only—that is, the clergy—can open to mankind the gates of heaven; for it is they who are more in possession of the ears of the masses than any other class of men. And the only way to realize the “millennium” is by educating the masses; by making them realize their worth, their manhood, and their power; by bringing home to them that *they are the salt of the earth* and responsible for the conditions under which they are living, and that on themselves devolves the duty of establishing the reign (or “kingdom”) for which they are sighing.

The time has come for making an end to the unholy alliance of religion with theology. We have arrived at the parting of the ways. The choice lies between “the two commandments on which hang all the law and the prophets” and the irrational doctrines and dogmas of theology, which in essence are the negation of these basic principles.

Theology in the past—however ill founded were its tenets—had at least this to its credit, that it was sincere, that its votaries believed what they taught. That is no longer the case. The doctrines and dogmas of theology are too flagrantly out of harmony with the spirit of the times. They cannot be reconciled with modern thought, with present aspects of nature or of existence as revealed by the wider knowledge of to-day. It is almost unthinkable how an educated man can preach such obsolete doctrines without doing violence to his understanding or his conscience. He does so under a kind of compulsion, in the belief that these tenets are as essential to religion as religion itself is essential to the well-being of man. But of these two propositions the latter only is true; whilst the former is the bane of true religion.

Theology has for so long arrogated to itself the sole guardianship of all that concerns religion, that it has become a mental habit to regard the two as indissolubly

connected, and not infrequently as identical ; whereas in point of fact the two themes have nothing in common.

To this confusion of thought must be attributed the anomalous mental attitude of the clergy which obliges them to preach what in their hearts they do not—because they cannot—believe themselves. They do so in the mistaken belief that religion without these doctrines is impossible ; and in this hypnotic state they compromise between conviction and conventionalism “ in the interest of religion,” as they persuade themselves. In truth, however, they are sacrificing religion on the altar of an obsolete and discredited *cult*.

It is an absurd fear that to jettison the shibboleths of theology might react injuriously on religion itself. The contrary is the truth. It is these shibboleths which drive people from the Churches and discredit the belief in the value or utility of religion. Their retention only begets an enforced hypocrisy on the one hand and a contempt for religion on the other ; whereas their abandonment would mean not decadence, but the renaissance of the religious spirit.

A new outlook and a new hope would infuse life into the Churches ; and a new and wider sphere of action would be opened to the clergy. Relieved of the incubus of an enforced belief in obsolete and irrational doctrines, they could preach the “ kingdom of God ” in sincerity and in truth. They could prepare the people for “ the life which is to come ” (the “ *olam habo* ” of the prophets), and teach them how this better life is to be realized—not in the clouds, but *here on earth*.

And in doing so the Churches would become vital and vitalizing institutions, wielding a power against which despots and tyrants would be impotent. For those who can reach the hearts and souls of the people, to them belongs the “ *kingdom* ” and the *power*, and—of necessity—also the glory.

The “ kingdom of heaven ” is not to be taken with violence. It is the meek, the gentle, the forgiving and forbearing (οἱ πραεῖς), and *not* the violent, the haughty, or arrogant aggressors who will inherit—who in the end

*must* inherit—the earth. That is shown by the general trend of events. Every finger-post in history points unmistakably in that direction. That is the “world to come” of the ancient seers and prophets. It is the millennium—a possible and practicable millennium—after which mankind is groping. *And that is also our destiny, against which despots are fighting in vain.*

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